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HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

Volume III
TRANS-SUTLEJ SIKHS
1769—1799

By the same author —

1. History of the Sikhs, Vol I, 1739-1768.
2. History of the Sikhs, Vol. II, Cis-Sutlej, 1769-1799
3. Studies in Later Mughal History of the Panjab.
4. Life and Work of Mohan Lal Kashmiri

205n
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Printed by Muza Muhammad Sadiq at the Ripon Printing Press,
Bull Road, Lahore and Published by Mr. Balkrishna for the
Minerva Book Shop, Lahore

PREFACE

From ploughshare to sword, from sword to forts, from forts to fortresses, from fortresses to garrisons, from garrisons to armies, from armies to territories, and from territories to kingdom—these were the stages in the rise of the Sikhs to power. Before monarchy came into existence the Sikhs had set themselves up as lords of the domains they had conquered. Being the sons of a race of leaders and warriors who had devoted all their lives to continuous warfare, they could not keep still.

It was danger which had led them from weakness to strength, from strength to greatness and from greatness to glory. This greatly disappeared with the death of Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1772. They were therefore determined to find a quarrel even amongst themselves if they had no enemy to fight.

Though a victim of civil strife, the Trans-Sutlej Sikhs displayed a noble trait of character in resisting the invader from the north-west single-handed, without receiving any assistance from their brethren of the Cis-Sutlej.

The last Muslim invasion of India took place in 1799, and the same year the foundation of Sikh monarchy was laid in the person of Ranjit Singh, whose achievements in political and military spheres have so far remained the highest pride of the Sikhs in particular and of the Panjabis in general.

From the time of Guru Gobind Singh's death in 1708 till Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore in 1799 it was a period of almost complete darkness not only in the history of the Sikhs but also in that of this province. I have tried to throw some light on this epoch in four volumes including the *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Panjab*, after a continuous, persistent and strenuous labour of ten years, during

which time I have seldom observed any holiday entirely to myself.

The life of a researcher, however, in this country is miserable. Not to speak of any encouragement the teaching profession does not even provide him with decent means of livelihood. After twelve years' hardest toil (including two years spent on *Life and Work of Mohan Lal*) I find myself unable to make both ends meet. I feel therefore compelled to call a halt to research activities, and re-direct my energies into some other channel.

I acknowledge my obligations to Principal Sitā Ram Kohli for making certain suggestions for its improvements and to Professor Gauri Shankar, M.A. (Panjab), B. Litt. (Oxon.), of the Government College, Lahore, for kindly helping me in reading the proofs.

Lahore,
April, 1944.

H. R. GUPTA

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MAP :

To illustrate the Trans-Sutlej Territory of the Sikhs...Frontispiece.

CHAPTER I

TERRITORIAL POSSESSIONS IN 1769

1. *Introductory*

AS we had occasion to observe in another connection, Ahmad Shah Abdali after his discomfiture in 1767 returned to Kandahar. In the course of another attempt made by him in December, 1768, he could only advance as far as the Chenab, from where he beat a hasty retreat without achieving anything. He was not destined to cross the Indus again. The field was thus left open to the Sikhs, and as the subsequent pages of this volume will reveal, the Sikhs made full use of the opportunity. They extended their territorial possessions rather rapidly, and succeeded in establishing their jurisdiction over both the plain and the hill portions of the Panjab.

The possessions which the Sikh chiefs held in 1769 were as under :

2. *The Jullundur Doab*

The Ahluwalia Misl.—The celebrated Jassa Singh Ahluwalia held some territory in the neighbourhood of Kapurthala, Talwandi, Jandiala (12 miles south of Jullundur), Nurmahal, Bhunga, Balachor, Haibatpur, Cholha, Qaimpur, yielding about ten lakhs a year.¹

The Singhpuria Misl.—The territories of the Singhpuria Misl under Khushhal Singh comprised the southern part of the Jullundur district, and some places in the south-west of

¹ *Rajas of the Punjab*, 459-60. Nur Muhammad, the author of *Jang Namah* on p. 177 states that Jassa Singh Ahluwalia also held the city of Jullundur, which might have been possessed by him temporarily.

Hoshiarpur, all worth three lakhs a year.¹

The Karorasinghia Misl.—Karora Singh, a Birk Jat of village Birkian, the leader of the *Misl* which bore his name, possessed Hariana, Sham Chaurasi, Khurdin, Kinori, Garja, Hoshiarpur, all the four Basis, Shamsabad in Nurmahal *parganah*, Banbeli, Bahadurpur and country about Talwan. Mian Mahmud Khan of Talwan was his tributary.²

The Dallewalia Misl.—The well-known Sikh chief Tara Singh Ghaiba of the Dallewalia *Misl* held the country about Rahon, Mahatpur, Nawanshahar and Phillaur, the last of which was given over to Tara Singh Kakar. He wrested Serai Dakhni from Sharf-ud-din of Jullundur. Nakodar was seized from Munj Rajputs. In this campaign Sujan Singh Badecha was killed by a musket ball. Tara Singh amply provided for the deceased's family which is represented by the Sardars of Shahkot and Dhanowal in the south-west of Nakodar. His territories, some of which were also situated on the other side of the Sutlej, yielded nearly eight lakhs a year.³

¹ *Jullundur District Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 31 ; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 41. Khushhal Singh's son Budh Singh built a masonry fort at Jullundur, the site of which is now occupied by *Qila Mohalla*.

² *Jullundur District Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 32 ; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 29, 33; Gyan Singh, 1007 ; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 83.

"The Talwan *ilaka* extended from the Ghorewaha country in the east as far west as Shahkot. In the north the Bein and Ghurka were its limits, and the Sutlej bounded it on the south. It contained 360 villages. Talwan was part of the country occupied by the Munj Rajputs and was held by Mian Mahmud Khan at this time. He had a few hundred troopers of his own, but he found it advisable to take protection of Karora Singh. The Talwan territory was shut in on one side by that of the Sardars of Nurmahal who were subordinate to the Ahluwalia chief and on the other by branches of the Dullewalia confederacy, and was very circumscribed." *Jullundur District Settlement Report*, 1892, pp. 32, 77.

³ *Ganesh Das*, 206 ; *Bute Shah*, 244b-249a and 255b-256a ; Gyan Singh, 1014 ; *Jullundur Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 34 ; *Jullundur District Gazetteer*, 75 ; *Imperial Gazetteer*, 1908, *Punjab*, i, 424. (Tara Singh Ghaiba was a resident of village Kang, in Tahsil Nakodar, lying about three miles south of Lohian on the south side of Bein Stream. The title Ghaiba was given to him because he was very clever and he could understand mysterious things. Ghaiba means one who can solve mysteries. Originally

Hari Singh of village Kaleki near Kasur possessed Garhshankar and its neighbourhood.¹

Mansa Singh held Garhdiwala and Bahram.²

The Kanhiya Misl.—Jai Singh, the leader of the Kanhiya Misl, kept possession of Mukerian, Hajipur, Kerot and other Awan villages.³

The Ramgarhia Misl.—Jassa Singh Ramgarhia retained Miani, Sarih, Urmur, Tanda, Meghowal, Mukandpur, Jhora, Dabwan, Marala, Sahri, Maniwal, Zahura, and the country along the Beas, worth ten lakhs a year.⁴

3. *The Bari Doab*

The Kanhiya Misl.—Jai Singh owned most of the *parganah* of Batala together with the following territories:—Parol, Gharota (7 villages), Taragarh, Adalatgarh, Mirthal (17 villages), Nangal Bhur (20 villages), Jandi Chauntra, Bianpur, Durangla, Gurdaspur, Jhabkara, Khunda, Fatahgarh, Chitaurgarh, Shahpur, Dehr, Hara (16 villages), Shakargarh (34 villages), Kot Haina (54 villages), Narot (65 villages), Nattar (18 villages), Sohian, Gilwali, Thoba and Panjgarian.

Amar Singh Bagga held Sujanpur, Sukalgarh, Palahi (18 villages), Dharmkot and Bahrampur.

he was a poor goatherd and used to pass his flock over the swollen Bein by means of ropes, and thus won this title. His goats were stolen by a notorious Gujar robber Suleman, and his few household effects were carried off by the revenue officials to pay the government tax. Thereupon he left his village and became a Sikh taking *pahal* from Gurdial Singh. Even then he was badly provided with the necessaries of life. Tara Singh with his companions came across some troopers of Ahmad Shah who were in search of a ford to cross the Bein. Tara Singh offered them his services and showed them a place where they could safely cross the stream. The Sikhs were employed to take their goods, horses and arms across it. When they got to the other side they did not think it necessary to return and immediately disappeared with the things they had secured. *Jullundur Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 32; *Ali-ud-din*, 174b; *Bute Shah*, 244b-254b.)

¹ *Jullundur District Settlement Report*, 1892, p. 38.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Punjab Chiefs*, 316.

⁴ *Gyan Singh*, 1002; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 10.

Tata Singh retained Kandi (26 villages) and the country up to the hills.

Desa Singh possessed forty-five villages in the *pargana*hs of Kauntarpur, Mirthal, Gharota and Surajpur.

Mirza Singh ruled over Ratangarh, Uchak, Bhorī, Bhiku Chak, Rampur, Saluwal, Malkana and Ajnala.

Natha Singh possessed the territory around Rangar Nangal.¹

The Ramgarhia Misl.—Jassa Singh Ramgarhia owned Ghuman, Riyarki, Kadian, Batala, Kalanaur, Khakowal, Srīgobindpur and Mattewal.²

The Ahluwalia Misl.—Jassa Singh Ahluwalia held Sarhali, Sirhala, Bondala, Mahtabkot, Jalalabad, Vairawal, Kot Mahmud Khan, Fatahabad and Goindwal.³

The Bhangi Misl.—The Bhangi chiefs kept possession of Pathankot, Bulaki (29 villages), Chhina, Sainsra, Taran Taran, Amritsar, Lahore and its neighbourhood.

The Nakai Misl.—Ran Singh and Kamar Singh of the Nakka country lying between the Ravi and the Sutlej south of Lahore held Baharwal, Chunian, Dipalpur, Kanganpur, Jethupur, Khudian, Mustafabad, Shergarh, Devsal, Faridabad, Chhanga Manga and Gugera, yielding above ten lakhs annually.⁴

4. *The Rechna Doab*

The Bhangi Misl.—The major portion of district Sialkot and portions of the Gujranwala and Jhang districts were in the possession of the famous Bhangi chiefs, Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh.

They handed over to their retainers the following territories :—Chaprar, Gondal, Rangpur, Kotli Loharan, Bahadur-

¹ *Jang Namah*, 176 ; *Bute Shah*, 222a ; *Khushwaqt Rai*, 139 ; *Ganesh Das*, 207 ; *Gurdaspur District Gazetteer*, 12-9 ; *Punjab Chiefs*, 171, 305, 321, 322, 375, 399 ; *Gyan Singh*, 1016 ; *Gujranwala District Gazetteer*, 15-6.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Amritsar District Gazetteer*, 10-1 ; 1892-3 edition, 21-2 ; *Gyan Singh*, 1036.

⁴ *Ganesh Das*, 206 ; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 22 ; *Punjab Chiefs*, 119, 341 ; *Montgomery District Gazetteer*, 30-1.

pur, Kalowal, Roras, Ugoke, Sahowala, Baddoke, Adamke, Kopra, Begowala, Goindke, Rachara, Ban Bajwa, Kul Bajwa, Sohndreke, Chahar, Bhagowal, Muradpur, Chitti Sheikhan, Bhagwal, Sialkot, Pathanwali, Kamanwala, Kundanpur, Chiniot and Jhang.

Nidhan Singh Hattu took possession of Daska, Vadala, Jabhoke, Nidala, Mokhal, Akbar, Bhatti Bhangu, Ghalotian and Dhamoke.

Bhag Singh Hallowalia held Zafarwal, Bal, Kila Sobha Singh, Kila Suba Singh (these two forts were built by the sons of this Sardar), Dhodha, Saokandvind, Changi Changa, Kasso-wala, Doriki, and Budha Gorhaya.

Dhanna Singh Kalalwalia kept possession of Kalalwala, Panwana, Chaubra and Maharajke.

Karam Singh China retained Bajra, Rurki, Firozke, Kaleke, Sioke and Khanna.

Nahar Singh of Chamyari owned Pasrur, Lalla, Sankhatra, Dhamthal, Marara, Sihowal, Jahur, Throh, Chewinda, Shah-zada, Mundeke, Badiana and Khanowali.

Sahib Singh of Gujrat held Bajwat, Suhawa Rajiwala and Hamidpur.

Jodh Singh possessed Gharthal, Gojra, Mitranwali, and Talwandi Musa Khan.¹

The Kanhiya Misl.—Jaimal Singh kept possession of Sambrial, Malkanwala, Satrah, and Siranwali Nunar.

Sudh Singh Dodia held Jamke and Bhopalwala.²

The Sukarchakia Misl.—Charat Singh Sukarchakia held Gujranwala, Eminabad, Ramnagar, Wazirabad and parts of Hafizabad, Sheikhpura and Naushahra *parganahs*.³

The Nakai Misl.—Kamar Singh possessed Kot Kamalia and Ran Singh a portion of Sharakpur *parganah*.⁴

¹ *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 17, 19; *Punjab Chiefs*, 373; *Khushwaqt Rai*, 133-4; *Bute Shah*, 220b; *Ganesh Das*, 207; *Jang Namah*, 176.

² *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 19.

³ *Sohan Lal*, ii, 5; *Gujranwala District Gazetteer*, 15.

⁴ *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 22.

5. *The Chaj Doab*

The Bhangi Misl.—Gujar Singh Bhangi retained Gujrat, Waraich Midh, Musachuha and Qadirabad, roughly speaking all the territory east of Sahiwal, Shahpur and the Salt Range extending as far as the Chenab.

The Sukarchakia Misl.—Charat Singh held Jalalpur, Kunjah, Miani, Bhera and the Salt Range.¹

6. *The Sind Sagar Doab*

The Sukarchakia Misl.—Charat Singh possessed Rohtas, Chakwal, Dhamni, Kot Sahib Khan, Kot Raja and Ahmadabad. He also overran the southern part of Rawalpindi district ; but he did not hold it under him.²

The Bhangi Misl.—Gujar Singh penetrated farther north, subdued the warlike tribes of Rawalpindi district and established his outpost at Rawalpindi under the charge of his capable Captain Milkha Singh Thepuria who successfully maintained himself in that position.³

¹ *Khushwaqt Rai*, 130-1 ; *Ratan Chand*, 36-8 ; *Ganesh Das*, 208-9 ; *Gujrat District Gazetteer*, 16 ; *Shahpur District Gazetteer*, 17-8 ; *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab*, ii, 112, 122, 162 ; *Chiefs and Families of Note*, ii, 320 ; *Punjab Chiefs*, 580 ; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 50.

² *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 50 ; *Jang Namah*, 177 ; *Punjab Chiefs*, 535-6 ; *Jhelum District Gazetteer*, 45.

³ *Rawalpindi District Gazetteer*, 37.

CHAPTER II

EXPANSION OF SIKH TERRITORIES IN THE PLAINS

1. Central Panjab

MOST of the Central Panjab had already been occupied by the Sikhs. Only a few independent Muslim principalities maintained their existence to succumb eventually.

In 1769 Sher Khan, the chief of the Nepals along the lower course of the Sutlej, was subdued by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. In 1770 Rai-ka-Kot, a fort built by Rai Ibrahim of Kapurthala in the midst of the colonies of Afghans at Vairawal to the west of the Beas, was captured by the chief leader of the Dal Khalsa.¹

In 1771 Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jhanda Singh Bhangi were staying at Amritsar where they received "complaints of the Brahmans against the violence of the Afghans of that place",² and that "cows were not protected at Kasur".³ The Sikh chiefs immediately decided to attack the town and punish the offenders. Leaving Amritsar they halted at Taran Taran. Khem Karan was the second stage where they spent two days. Here they were joined in large numbers by the Sikhs who were attracted by the possibility of reaping a large booty.

Then they dashed upon Kasur. Hamid Khan and Usman Khan, the two chief leaders of the Afghans, came out to fight. In spite of the stubborn resistance on the part of the

¹ *Jassa Singh Binod*, 197, 198.

² *J.A.S.B.*, xvii, part ii, 564.

³ *Jassa Singh Binod*, 198.

"The cow being considered the most sacred animal of this world by the followers of Govind." *Latif*, 291.

defenders the Sikhs managed to force their way into the city. A hand to hand fight continued in the streets. The invaders destroyed Garhi Abdur Rahim Khan, and a lot of booty fell into their hands. Hard fighting went on in other forts¹ for a couple of days. The Afghan chiefs ultimately found resistance useless, and sued for peace. They promised not to slaughter cows, not to maltreat their Hindu subjects and to pay tribute in addition to a fine of four lakhs of rupees. The terms having been accepted the Sikh chiefs granted robes of honour to the Afghan rulers and retired from Kasur.²

Marching backward the Sikh chiefs halted at Nauri on the banks of the Ravi. Afterwards they reached Saurian (16 miles north-west of Amritsar), where Ahmad Khan and Umar Khan Pathans submitted to them and offered money and horses as a *nazar*. Next halt was made at Jastarwal, the Musalmans of which place presented them a horse and two thousand rupees by way of tribute. Further on the Rajputs of Chamryari paid five thousand rupees and gave some horses. At Ramdas (25 miles north of Amritsar) Jassa Singh Ahluwalia paid homage to Shah Bahram, a Muslim saint, who granted to the Sikh leader a robe of honour. The Sikh moved to Pakho Thather, the stronghold of Randhawas who found their safety in submission.³

In the same year Gujar Singh Bhangi led an expedition against Ahmad Khan Chatha,⁴ the leader of a Jat clan, but

¹ There were twelve forts, all situated quite close to each other. Their names were :—Kot Khwajah Husain, Kila Pukhta, Kot Ghulam Muhayud-din, Kot Murad Khan, Kot Usman Khan, Kot Badar-ud-din Khan, Kot Bakar-ud-din Khan, Kot Azam Khan, Kot Hakim Khan, Kot Fatahdin Khan, Piran ka Kot and Kot Abdul Ghani Khan. Cf. *Lahore District Gazetteer*, 196.

² *Jassa Singh Binod*, 198-9 ; *J. A.S.B.*, xvii, part ii, 564 ; *Latif*, 297.

³ *Jassa Singh Binod*, 200-1.

⁴ Nur Muhammad was the first of the tribe who rose to political importance. His friendship was courted by Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu. He and his son Ahmad Khan were frequently involved in war with Charat Singh Sukarchakia. *Gujranwala District Gazetteer*, 19.

claiming Rajput descent, who maintained a sturdy independence in the Ramnagar *parganah* of Gujranwala district. The Muslim chief submitted after slight opposition, paid tribute including the famous Zamzama gun, which henceforward came to be called *Bhangion Wali Top*.¹

¹ *Jassa Singh Binod*, 200; *Gujranwala District Gazetteer*, 15-6; *Latif*, 340.

It will not be out of place here to give a brief account of this gun. It was cast at Lahore by Shah Nazir under the directions of Shah Vali Khan, the Prime Minister of Ahmad Shah Durrani. The material, a mixture of copper and brass, was obtained from the Hindus of the city, one vessel being taken from each house. The gun which was to be used against the Marathas at Panipat was not ready till the date of the battle. On his return Ahmad Shah left it with Khwajah Abed, the Governor of Lahore, who kept it in the Shah Burj of the fort.

In 1765 when Lahore was taken by the Sikhs, the gun fell to the share of Charat Singh Sukarchakia who carried it to Gujranwala. In the Sardar's absence the gun was captured by Ahmad Khan Chatha, who placed it in his fort of Ahmadnagar. Pir Muhammad quarrelled with his brother for the possession of it, and in the fight a son of Pir Muhammad and two sons of Ahmad Khan lost their lives. Pir Muhammad invited assistance from Gujar Singh Bhangi who seized the gun and took it to Gujrat. After two years' possession in a fight it again fell into the hands of Charat Singh. The Chathas recovered it from him and put it in the fort of Manchar, and then removed it to Rasulnagar (modern Ramnagar). Later on it was again seized by Jhanda Singh Bhangi who placed it in the fort of Amritsar, where it lay till 1802, when it was taken possession of by Ranjit Singh, grandson of Charat Singh.

This gun required a ball of one maund in weight, and "it came to be regarded as a talisman of supremacy among the Sikhs." Ranjit Singh used it in five campaigns—Daska, Kasur, Sujjanpur, Wazirabad and Multan. At the last place its barrel was seriously injured, and it became unfit for service. From 1818 to 1860 it lay at the Delhi Gate. In February, 1870 it was placed near the Central Museum where it now stands.

The inscription on the gun is as follows :—

"By order of the Emperor (Ahmad Shah) Dur-i-Duran,
Shah Vali Khan, the Wazir, made this gun, named Zamzamah, the
taker of strongholds.

The work of Shah Nazir.

In the reign of the Emperor possessing dignity like Feridun,

Dispenser of Justice robed in Equity—

(In the reign of) his present Majesty Ahmad Shah Dur-i-Duran,

A Prince occupying a throne mighty as Jamshid's—

In 1773 Sultanpur, the seat of government of Rai Ibrahim of Kapurthala, was invaded by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Kanwar Mohar Singh and Bhag Singh took the leading part in the attack. After some resistance the Nawab gave in and sued for peace. Kapurthala with twenty-seven villages was left with Rai Ibrahim for an annual tribute, while the rest of the country was taken possession of by Jassa Singh and placed under the command of Kanwar Bhag Singh.¹

In 1780 on account of the rebellious conduct of Rai Ibrahim Kapurthala and other villages were captured, while the Rai was allowed to take his family and property in safety and was granted a pension for life. Kapurthala became the head-quarter of Kanwar Bhag Singh, grandson of Jassa Singh, while Jassa Singh still maintained the seat of his government at Fatahabad near the western bank of the Beas.²

There was issued unto the Chief Wazir,
 From the threshold of His Highness.
 An order to have cast, with every possible skill
 A gun terrible as a dragon and huge as a mountain.
 (Yea the order was given) to his heaven-enthroned Majesty's devoted servant,
 Shah Vali Khan Wazir.
 So in order to effect this great achievement
 The Master-workman called up his endeavours,
 Till with consummate toil was cast
 This wondrous gun Zamzamah,
 A destroyer even of the strongholds of heaven,
 Under the auspices of His Majesty.
 I enquired of Reason for the date of this gun ;
 Reason angrily replied,
 'If thou wilt give thy life in payment,
 I will repeat to thee the date'.
 I did so, and he replied,—'What a gun is this ?
 The form of a fire-raining dragon'."

The last line "پیمکری از دھائی آتش بار" gives the chronogram of the date of the gun—1174 A.H. or 1761 A.D., each letter having a numerical value according to the *Abjad* system.

The Indian Antiquary, viii, 1879, p. 54 ; *Punjab Chiefs*, 387-8, f.n.

Jassa Singh Bnrod, 205-9.

¹ *Ibid.*, 224-5.

In June, 1797, Ranjit Singh, Sahib Singh, Dal Singh, Jodh Singh of Wazirabad, Chait Singh son of Lahna Singh, and Diwan Lakhpat Rai besieged Ramnagar alias Rasulnagar. The garrison under the command of Hashmat Khan, son of Ahmad Khan Chatha, sought for peace through Sahib Singh. Ranjit Singh accepted the terms, granted Hashmat Khan two villages in Ramnagar *parganah* for his maintenance, and took possession of the fort.

About the same time Gulab Singh Bhangi, Jassa Singh, Jodh Singh, Diwan Singh Ramgarhia, Bhag Singh Ahluwalia and Lahna Singh encamped in the vicinity of Kasur. The Pathan chiefs of Kasur paid Rs. 11,000 of *nazar* and the Sikh chiefs returned to Amritsar.¹

In December, 1797, Ranjit Singh invaded Pind Dadan Khan. The Muslim chief of the place expecting the arrival of Shah Zaman offered firm resistance ; but he was ultimately defeated. He was, however, retained in his position for an annual tribute.²

2. Southern Panjab

Hira Singh, the founder of the Nakai *Misl*, had lost his life while fighting with Sheikh Subhan Chishti of Pakpattan. His son Dal Singh being a minor, he was succeeded by his nephew Nahar Singh, son of Natha Singh, to the command of the *Misl*. He was killed in 1768 at Kot Kamalia in a battle with the Kharrals. His younger brother Ran Singh succeeded him.

Ran Singh proved himself the most powerful of the Nakai chiefs. He extended the possessions of his *Misl* and raised its prestige considerably. He held the *talukas* of Bucheke, Faridabad, Jethpur, Chunian, part of Kasur, Sharak-

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 393, 27th July, 1797.

At this time Jit Singh, son of Dalel Singh, and grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Dev, was enthroned at Jammu by the courtiers and the neighbouring hill Rajas. *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, No. 105, 7th February, 1798.

pur, Gugera, and at one time Kot Kamalia, the head-quarters of the Kharral tribe. Though this *Misl* was not so strong as several other Sikh confederacies, yet it commanded an annual revenue of nine lakhs and a force of 2,000 horsemen with camel swivels and a few guns. Ran Singh's seat of government was at Baharwal.

Another branch of the Nakaj *Misl*, and a rival family of the Baharwal house was established at Sayyidwala. Kamar Singh was its leader. Ran Singh fought with this chief several times with varying success, eventually gained advantage over him, and seized Sayyidwala. Ran Singh died in 1781.

His eldest son Bhagwan Singh, who became the head of the elder branch was not able to hold Sayyidwala which was recovered by Wazir Singh, brother of Kamar Singh. He also captured some of Bhagwan Singh's villages, but these were restored later on. Bhagwan Singh realized that unless he would secure assistance of some powerful chief, he might lose his territories. With this view he betrothed his sister Raj Kaur¹ to Ranjit Singh, son of Mahan Singh, the rising Sikh leader of the Sukarchakia *Misl*. After this he turned his attention towards Pakpattan, and finally conquered the country of the Hans.

Kamar Singh, the leader of the rival house, was a great chief. He took possession of the territory situated on both sides of the Ravi, and extended his country from Faridabad to the borders of Multan. On one occasion the Hans of Pakpattan threatened, or according to one account actually took Kot Kamalia. The Kharrals of the place invited his help. Kamar Singh expelled the Hans and retained Kamalia in his own hands. The Kharral chief of the place was given a *talugdari* allowance in exchange, locally called *athog* or five pies in the *kharwar* of *nijkari* crops, and one rupee per *kanal* of *zabti* crops. Satgharah which had been laid waste by the Sikhs on a former occasion and abandoned by its inhabitants was rebuilt by him. To protect this village from the

¹ The marriage took place in 1798, and in 1802 this lady gave birth to a son who later became Maharaja Kharak Singh.

attacks of the neighbouring tribes he built a brick wall round it which was in good condition about the close of the last century. He subdued the independent tribes of the Ravi such as Kathias, Kharrals and other robber clans who settled down to comparatively peaceful life. He divided his possessions into two divisions, Satgharah and Sayyidwala, and built five forts, Killianwala, Dhauri, Kamalia, Chichawatni and Harappa. He developed agriculture, and "in this respect, considering the difficulties under which he laboured his rule will compare not unfavourably even with that of Sawan Mall." He died about 1780. It is believed that he was put to death by an Upera Kharral at Rahna Moharan near Sayyidwala.

Another Sikh chief, Budh Singh Bhangi, defeated the Wattu tribe, which occupied a large tract on both sides of the Sutlej. In a fight which took place at Khadwali the Wattus were completely overpowered; but they were treated with consideration and were not despoiled of their property. Budh Singh greatly improved cultivation, and as a result the Wattus became quite well off and contented. His territory extended from Mārūf in the east to Bhangianwala near Pakpattan in the west. On the south it was bounded by the Sutlej and ran as far as the old Beas on the north. His liberal rule was appreciated by all his subjects. He sympathised with them in their difficulty, and in times of hardship gave them every possible help. In consequence they were deeply attached to him.¹

3. *South-Western Panjab*

In the south-western Panjab the Bhangi Sikhs continued to dominate. In 1764 and 1766 they had already overrun this part of the province. In 1771 Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh again directed their attention to Multan, and despatched Majja Singh, one of their commanders to attack this place. He pillaged Khai, Sadullahpur and the neighbouring

¹ *Punjab Chiefs*, 119-20, *Montgomery District Gazetteer*, 31-4; *Latif*, 312-3.

places subject to Multan and Bahawalpur. The Nawab of Bahawalpur sent his nephew Jafar Khan, nominated by him the heir apparent, at the head of a select force to check the progress of Majja Singh on the other side of the river. Jafar Khan engaged the Sikh invader in a fierce fight in which several officers of Bahawalpur were killed. They might have lost the day had they not been reinforced in time by a fresh contingent from Bahawalpur. Majja Singh lost his life in the action, and his followers retired to Multan which was besieged by them.¹

Shuja Khan, the governor of the province, shut himself up in the fort. *The siege lasted for a month and a half, during which time Shuja Khan applied for assistance from Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah, though a dying man, sent his commander-in-chief, Jahan Khan, who relieved the town of the Sikhs.

On Ahmad Shah's death in April, 1772, his son Timur Shah appointed Haji Sharif Khan Sadozai to the governorship of Multan. Shuja Khan retired to Shujabad, a town built by him. There he tried to intrigue against his successor with the active assistance of the Nawab of Bahawalpur. The Haji was indolent by temperament, and owing to his negligence the finances of the province soon dwindled. His failure in remitting the stipulated money to the treasury together with the machinations of the above chiefs weakened his position. Timur Shah appointed Haji Sharif Beg Taklu in charge of the finances. Sharif Khan put obstacles in his way, but he managed to pay the annual tribute with the valuable help of Dharam Das merchant, an inhabitant of Multan. In consequence Sharif Khan was dismissed only after six months' tenure. Sharif Beg became Governor and Dharam Das his finance minister.

Sharif took up his abode at Bahawalpur and worked for the fall of Sharif Beg. As a result differences arose between the Governor and his Diwan. Eventually they fell out over some money matters, and in a fight that followed Dharamjas,

¹ *Shahamat Ali*, 55; *Latif*, 297. Gyan Singh states that the Nawab of Bahawalpur purchased peace by paying one lakh of rupees. *Raj Khalsa*, i. 4.

the son-in-law of Dharam Das, was killed. Haji Sharif Beg was terrified at the idea of retribution from Timur Shah.

Considering that he had hopelessly broken with the king he invited Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh Bhangis whose territories lay in his neighbourhood offering one lakh of rupees on the condition of making his position secure.¹

The Sikh chiefs at once accepted the invitation. They marched at the head of a large force, and on reaching Multan decided to seize the province for themselves. They sought permission from the Governor to allow some of their Sikhs to visit the temple of Prahladji, and sent one thousand Sikhs into the city. From the temple they went to the fort and tried to break open one of its gates. The Governor finding resistance useless opened the gates and admitted the Sikh force into the fort. Thus the province of Multan and its dependencies fell into the hands of the Sikhs on the 25th December, 1772. The Governor was allowed to take all his baggage and retire to Talamba from where he went to Khairpur Tanwin, and there he died shortly afterwards. Jhanda Singh left Diwan Singh Chachowalia as his deputy in Multan and himself marched to the north-east.²

On Shuja Khan's death in 1776 he was succeeded to the estate of Shujabad by his son Muzaffar Khan. At this time Diwan Singh attacked Shujabad with a design of plundering it. He met with a strong resistance and returned to Multan unsuccessful. The Sikh force, however, ransacked the whole district of Shujabad. Muzaffar Khan went to Bahawlpur to seek assistance from the Nawab. About the same time an

¹ Another account says that the Governor promised to the Sikh chiefs "to deliver up to them the fort of Mooltan." *J.A.S.B.*, xii, part ii, p. 565.

² *Shahamat Ali*, 61-3; *Bute Shah*, 212b; *Ali-ud-din*, 134b-135a; *Shah Yusuf*, 63a-65b; *Punjab Chiefs*, 481.

Such insecure were the times of Haji Sharif Beg Taklu that nobody's life and property were safe. Even the cultivation of crops had practically stopped. A proverb still current in Multan district reminds us of it—
"Haji Sharif, na Rabi, na Kharif."

Cf. *Shah Yusuf*, 64a; *Multan District Gazetteer*, 27.

order was received from Timur Shah to drive away the Sikhs from Multan.

Muzaffar Khan and the Nawab of Bahawalpur laid siege to Multan. Ganda Singh was at Amritsar, and his deputy commanded a small force. In view of his meagre resources the Sikh Governor shut himself up inside the city. On the 23rd day of the siege a widow named Rajoo managed to open a gate for the besiegers. The Sikh soldiers retired to the fort, and the Muslim troops thoroughly plundered the inhabitants of the city. Just then arrived Ganda Singh, and in a bloody fight that ensued Muzaffar Khan and the Nawab were repulsed.¹

Both the Muslim chiefs retired to Shujabad fighting. The Sikh forces gave up their pursuit. Nawab Bahawal Khan went to Bahawalpur, while Muzaffar Khan stayed at Shujabad. Thereafter Muzaffar Khan continued to send regular reports against the Sikhs of Multan, and went on fomenting rebellion against their rule. Timur Shah despatched Baharu Khan,² a commander of great military experience to expel the Sikhs from Multan. He arrived in the Panjab in 1778 and laid siege to the fort of Multan. Shortly afterwards came the news that Timur Shah was engaged in a deadly strife with the ruler of Turan whose forces had entered Khorasan, and that he had been summoned to the scene of warfare. He consequently raised the siege and retreated homeward.

The operations in Khorasan having ceased Timur Shah directed his attention to the capture of Multan. At the head of a strong army he marched to Peshawar where he stayed to spend winter months. He despatched his general Madad Khan to Multan. He besieged the city and reduced the inhabitants to extremities for want of provisions. Just then Timur Shah recalled him to suppress a serious rebellion.

In the winter of 1779 Timur Shah again marched to India and besieged Multan early in January, 1780. Ganda Singh

¹ *Ali-ud-din*, 134b-135a ; *Shah Yusaf*, 63a-65b ; *Shahamat Ali*, 61-3 ; *Bute Shah*, 212b.

² According to *Shah Yusaf*, 65a, Baharu Khan had only one eye.

was at Amritsar, while his deputy was inadequately equipped, and he had no hope of receiving any reinforcements within a short space of time. He opened negotiations through Abdul Karim Khan Afghan, whose family was in the fort, and surrendered the fort on obtaining protection for himself and his men. This took place on the 18th February, 1780. Muzaffar Khan was appointed the Governor of the Province.¹

4. *Western Panjab*

After the capture of Multan in 1772, Jhanda Singh Bhangi turned his steps to the north-east and subdued the Baluch chiefs in Jhang district. Proceeding further north Jhanda Singh laid under contribution the Nawab of Ahmadabad (situated on the western side of the Jhelum opposite Bhera), and realized a tribute of twenty thousand rupees. According to Cunningham and Sayyid Muhammad Latif he advanced to the Indus and conquered Mankera; but the Mianwali District Gazetteer states that "local tradition is against Mankera having been occupied by the Sikhs before its final capture by Ranjit Singh." It seems probable that Jhanda Singh made the chief of Mankera his tributary, leaving him otherwise intact. Jhanda Singh then crossed the Indus at Kalabagh which he seized, and ravaged some portions of Dera Ismail Khan district. On his way back he captured Pindi Bhatian and Dhara.²

¹ J. A. S. B., XVIII, ii, 563-7; *Latif*, 297-9; *Punjab Chiefs*, 481-2; *Multan District Gazetteer*, 27; *Cunningham*, 115.

For details of Timur Shah's invasion of Multan see author's *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Panjab*, pp. 237-42.

Muzaffar Khan held this post until 1818, when Multan was finally conquered by the Sikhs. Muzaffar Khan retained his position with great difficulty. "During the first ten years of his rule he was constantly harassed by the Bhangi Sikhs, who were at one time joined by Sahib Khan Sial of Jhang, and were on this occasion with difficulty repulsed."

Multan District Gazetteer, 27.

² *Raj Khalsa*, i, 3-4; *Cunningham*, 115; *Latif*, 297; *Mianwali District Gazetteer*, 1915 edition, p. 32.

5. *North-Western Panjab*

The subjugation of the warlike tribes in the north-western Panjab was effected by Gujar Singh Bhangi. The Gakhars, the Janjuas, the Awans, the Golas, the Garhwals, the Dalals, the Dunials, the Tarkhelis, the Khattars, the Ghebas and the Jodrahs of the Rawalpindi and Jhelum districts and the Salt Range—all gave way before him. In this difficult task he was assisted by Charat Singh Sukarchakia. In 1770 the Gakhars were completely subdued. In the *parganah* of Fatahpur Baorah the Gakhars owned 669 villages. Milkha Singh, the deputy of Gujar Singh Bhangi, who served as a warden of the marches with his head-quarters at Rawalpindi, granted 192 villages in *jagir* to the most notable tribes. These estates called *Mushakhsa* were subject only to a trifling tribute. The remaining villages were kept under his own direct management and were known as *Khalsa*. These *jagirs* were distributed as follows :—

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Gakhars of Saivadpur | 22 villages |
| „ Ajuri | 2 „ |
| „ Shekhpur | 3 „ |
| „ Rawalpindi | 7 „ |
| „ Malikpur | 1 „ |
| „ Mandala and Chaneri of the hills of Murree and Phulgiran | 107 „ |
| Runials } Tumair | 2 „ |
| Pothials } | |
| Golas | 22 „ |
| Janjuas of Runial | 6 „ |
| „ Dhanial | 18 „ |
| Sayyids of Shalditta | 2 „ |

Total ... 192

Pindi Gheb composed of the *parganahs* of Sil, Khunda, Jundla and Makhad, and inhabited by the hardiest races the district contained took rather long in its full subjugation.

In the same way in the territories of Fatehjang and Attock the tribes were overpowered after a prolonged struggle, and

in parts of both of these tahsils and the whole of Pindi Gheb tahsil the Sikh rule "was never so fully developed."¹

¹ *Rawalpindi District Gazetteer*, 37, 69, 71, 106, 107, 109, 111 ; *Sohan Lal*.
ii, 15.

CHAPTER III

CONQUEST OF THE KANGRA AND JAMMU HILLS

1. *Three Groups of Hill States*

THE expansion of territories of the Sikhs into the hills situated in the north of the Panjab was proceeding simultaneously with their conquest of the Panjab plains. The hill states lying between the Indus and the Sutlej in the outer ranges of the Himalayas fell into three political groups. The first group comprised Kashmir and many small states situated between the Indus and the Jhelum, all ruled over by Muslim chiefs. Kashmir passed under the Durrani rule in 1752. It was administered by the governors appointed by the Durrani monarchs, while the petty states were only tributary. The Durrani seldom interfered with the chiefs of Hazara territory for several reasons. The country was situated far off from the main route, and being mountainous was difficult of access to Afghan horsemen, who formed almost the entire body of Durrani armies. The people were of warlike nature, and being the co-religionists of the invaders were needed for recruitment in their armies.

The second group embraced Jammu and the petty states lying between the Jhelum and the Ravi. There were twenty-two states in all. Out of these eight chiefly situated between the Jhelum and the Chenab were under Muslim chiefs—Akhnur, Riasi, Kashtwar, Rajaûri, Punch, Kotli, Bhimbar and Khari-Khariali. The remaining fourteen were Hindu, all lying between the Chenab and the Ravi—Jammu, Bahu, Dalpatpur, Samba, Jasrota, Trikot, Lakhanpur, Mankot (now called Ramkot), Behandrata, Chaneni, Bhoti, Bhadu, Balor (now known as Basohli) and Bhadarwah.

Ten states—Jammu, Bahu, Dalpatpur, Samba, Jasrota, Trikot, Lakhanpur, Mankot, Riasi and Akhnur—were ruled by a family of which Jammu was the head, and three—Basohli, Bhadu and Bhadarwah—were ruled by branches of the same family. The Raja of Jammu and other independent chieftains were in good books of the Durrani, as they occasionally paid them money and rendered other services required of them.

The third group included Kangra and other states situated between the Ravi and the Sutlej known as the Jullundur group. There were fourteen states in all, thirteen Hindu—Kangra, Guler, Jaswan, Datarpur, Siba, (all offshoots from the same stock), Kutlehar, Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Bangahal, Nurpur, Kotila and Chamba, while Shahpur was under a Muslim chief. Raja Ghamand Chand Katoch was a favourite of Ahmad Shah Durrani who appointed him governor of the Jullundur Doab and the hill principalities lying between the Ravi and the Sutlej. The Raja of Chamba paid tribute to the Durrani, and maintained cordial relations with them.

The Durrani rulers seldom interfered with the hill chiefs as long as they received regular remittances of tribute, and other services required of them from time to time.

2. *Prosperity of the Hill Rajas*

It was the financial prosperity of the hill rajas which attracted the attention of Sikh hordes. The material resources of the hills were not many; but they had been safe from the Muslim plunderers of the plains, and consequently had in course of time accumulated some riches. Besides, owing to political unrest which had been prevailing in the plains for many years past, the traffic was diverted to the hills. The traveller and the trader pursued the route passing across the Lower Siwalik Hills *via* Dehra Dun, Paonta (on the Jumna), Nahan, Nalagarh, Bilaspur (on the Sutlej), Hamirpur, Nadaun (on the Beas), Haripur, Nurpur, Basohli (on the Ravi), Mankot and Jammu. Thus the Sikhs in addition to fleecing money from the rajas had also the prospects of plundering the merchants

and traders who traded in Kashmir articles such as shawls, carpets, furs, musk, saffron and fruits. Moreover there was no fear of opposition as the people had lost their martial spirit owing to peaceful and unambitious life.

3. *The Sikh Intrusion into the Hills*

The Afghan rule in the hills lying between the Chenab and the Sutlej came to an end by 1769 when the political power of the Sikhs was established in the plains of the Panjab. Then the Sikhs turned their attention to these hills. Their cupidity was aroused by the prosperous condition of the petty hill rajas who were unable to make any stand against them. The Sikhs were familiar with the hill country as they had frequently taken shelter there during the Mughal persecution and the Durrani invasions.

The Kangra hills were the first to experience their encroachment. "Severe depredations were committed," says Forster, "on them by the Sicques, who plundered and destroyed their habitations, carried off their cattle, and if strong and well formed, the male children, who were, made converts to the faith of Nanock". The hill rajas could not resist the rising tide of the invaders, and they found their safety only in submission. Ghamand Chand was the first to yield and several others followed suit. They accepted the overlordship of a powerful neighbouring Sikh chief, promising to pay an annual tribute which did not amount to more than five per cent of the revenue. Regular payment of tribute exempted them from molestation except when they invited the Sikh chiefs to settle their domestic quarrels.¹

It was as early as 1770 that the Kangra hills became tributary to Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who ruled over the upper portions of the Bari and the Jullundur Doabs adjacent to these hills. He realized a tribute of two lakhs of rupees from all the Kangra hill states. At Talwara on the southern bank of the Beas he built a fort and stationed there his brother Mali Singh with 4,000 horse.²

¹ *The Asiatic Annual Register*, 1802, p. 10.

² *Raj Khalsa*, iii. 10; *J. P. H. S.*, iv, 1916, p. 93; viii, 1920, p. 68.

4. *Nurpur*

Nurpur became tributary to Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and after his expulsion from the Panjab the overlordship of this place passed on to Jai Singh Kanhiya. Nurpur "enjoys a state of more internal quiet, is less molested by the Sicques, and governed more equitably than any of the adjacent territories."¹

5. *Chamba*

The Sikhs increased their influence in Chamba at the invitation of the Raja of this place. Ranjit Dev of Jammu was also establishing at this time his rule over the hills between the Chenab and the Ravi. Taking advantage of the minority of Raja Raj Singh of Chamba and his relationship with the queen-mother he appointed Aklu, one of his officials, the chief minister of the State. On Raj Singh's attaining majority and the death of the queen-mother, Aklu was imprisoned. Ranjit Dev, indignant at this wanton insult, called upon his vassal Amrit Pal of Basohli to lead an expedition into Chamba. Amrit Pal overran the northern parts of the State called Churah, and is even believed to have seized and held the capital for three months. On this occasion Amrit Pal issued a copper-plate deed, bearing a date corresponding to the 5th May, 1774.

Raj Singh managed to escape to Kalanaur in the Gurdaspur district, and sought assistance from Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, who readily assented. The combined forces of the Sikhs and Chamba expelled the Basohli Chief. Raj Singh paid to the Sikhs one lakh of rupees, became tributary to Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and thus saved his territory from usurpation by Ranjit Dev.²

6. *Sansar Chand takes Sikhs in his Service*

Raja Ghamand Chand submitted to the growing power of the Khalsa but retaining at the same time his allegiance to

¹ Forster, i, 270.

² J. P. H. S., iv, 1916, pp 62-3 ; 1929, p. 52.

Ahmad Shah Durrani. To win the favour of the Afghan monarch Ghamand Chand had employed 4,000 Mussalmans, chiefly Rohillas and Afghans, in his army. On his death in 1774 his son and successor Tegh Chand followed the same policy and maintained mercenary troops in spite of Ahmad Shah's death which took place in 1772. He was succeeded in 1776 by his son Sansar Chand. The new ruler realizing that the danger of an Afghan invasion had greatly diminished and that the Sikhs had become predominant, reduced the number of his Muslim mercenaries, and recruited a body of two hundred Sikhs in his army.

This measure, however, proved injurious to his interests. The harmful effect of this alliance was noticed by the careful observer, Forster, who travelled in these parts in 1783. He remarks: "The ordinary revenue (of the territory of Kangra), estimated at seven lacks of rupees, has been much diminished by the chief's alliance with the Sicques, who spread destruction wherever they go. These marauders are now acting the part of the man whom fable represents to have been invited by the horse, to aid his contest with the boar; and you know the uses to which the thoughtless horse was applied, when victory was decided in favour of the combined forces."¹

7. *Mandi*

The Mandi State though a little distant did not escape from the Sikhs. It seems to have come under their influence about the same time as the other hill states, though no mention of it "occurs in the history till after 1781."²

8. *Basohli*

Basohli came to be dominated by the Sikhs in March, 1782. Raj Singh of Chamba was determined to revenge himself upon Basohli. He invaded the State in 1782, seized

¹Forster, i, 260-1.

²J. P. H. S. 1917, p. 17

the capital, sacked the country, and realized a fine of one lakh of rupees.¹

The raja of Basohli invited a body of the Sikhs to expel the Chamba forces from his State. The Sikhs came, ejected the invaders, and being fascinated with the place refused to withdraw. George Forster passed through Basohli in the disguise of a Muslim merchant, and crossed the river Ravi at this place on the 10th April, 1783. He recorded: "The boatman at the ferry of Bissouly, though a brother Mahometan, made an exorbitant demand of hire, which was considerably lessened by the interference of the Sicque horsemen, who saw the imposition, and had only to make known their will to effect obedience . . . In the ferry-boat were two Sicques going to the fort, of which, a detachment they belonged to, had taken possession, in consequence of being called in to the assistance of the Bissouly chief. Though this be the invariable result of every connection made with the Sicques, the infatuated mountaineers never fail to seek their aid when engaged in war. A bordering chief had invaded the Bissouly districts, plundered the inhabitants, and burned their villages, before any opposition was made. The Sicques were called in to repel the enemy, and defend the fort of Bissouly, but after performing the required service, they became pleased with their new situation, and refused to relinquish it."²

9. Capture of the Kangra Fort

The supremacy of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia did not last very long, as in 1775 he was overthrown by his rival Jai Singh Kanhiya, whose overlordship was now accepted by most of the Kangra states. A year later Sansar Chand succeeded to the sovereignty of the hills. Being very ambitious he wished to take possession of the fort of Kangra, the ancient home of his ancestors. The importance of the Kangra fort was

¹The date of the capture of Basohli is recorded on a stone now lying in the pavement in front of the temple of Lakshmi Narain at Chamba. The inscription reads as follows :—"Sam, 58, Chet par. 1, Basohli da shahar fatah kuta." [On the first of Chet of the year 58 (11th March, 1782) the town of Basohli was conquered.]

²Forster, i, 270-1; J. P. H. S., iv, 1916, p. 93.

expressed in a popular saying:—"He who holds the fort holds the hills."¹

The fort of Kangra enjoyed a great reputation for its strength. It stood on the summit of a high hill, and occupied a narrow strip of land lying between the rivers Manjhi and Banganga. The walls of the fort on the side of the Banganga rose to a height of 300 feet. It was accessible only from the side of the town. The fort was separated from the town by a rock only a few hundred feet wide, across which a deep ditch was cut at the foot of the walls. It possessed seven gateways and twenty-three bastions.²

The fort was at this time held by Saif Ali Khan, the last Mughal *faujdar* of Kangra. This brave man, though completely isolated and commanding nothing more than the territory within the range of his guns, sturdily maintained his position against all the onslaughts which were delivered upon him for nearly forty years. Only once he was forced to give up his allegiance to the Delhi Emperors when in 1758 he was coerced by the strong arm of Adina Beg Khan, the viceroy of the Panjab.

Sansar Chand made several attempts on the fort, but all were frustrated by Saif Ali Khan. The Raja invited assistance from Jai Singh Kanhiya promising to pay the expenses of the troops at the rate of Rs. 2,000 per day. Jai Singh readily agreed, and sent his son Gurbakhsh Singh at the head of a strong contingent in the company of Baghel Singh Karora-singhia. The combined forces laid siege to the fort in 1782, and continued for nearly a year. In spite of all the rigour of the siege Saif Ali Khan remained steadfast. But he was a dying man, and passed away in 1783. His dead body had to be conveyed to the burial ground outside the fort. The Mughal gunners in the fort had been won over by Sansar Chand, and they promised to let his men in for a suitable reward. Jiwan Khan, the son of late Saif Ali Khan, however, was bribed by Jai Singh's men, and the young *faujdar* finding his

¹ Elliot, vi, 526; *Kangra Settlement Report*, 9.

² *Archæological Survey Reports*, v, 162-3; *Maasir-ul-Umara*, ii, 184-90; Elliot, vi, 526; *J. P. H. S.*, viii, 235.

position untenable decided to hand over the fort to them. At a secret hour when the Nawab's men carried off the corpse of the Nawab to the *imambara*, the gunners sent a word to Sansar Chand to attack and capture the fort. This information leaked out to the Sikh auxiliaries, and as they were stationed nearest the gate to bear the brunt of musketry fire from the fort they seized the opportunity and entered the fort first without meeting any opposition from Jiwan Khan. They closed the doors upon Sansar Chand's men, and took possession of the fort to the chagrin of the Raja of Kangra.

In sustaining this siege for a long time Saif Ali Khan was assisted by the Rani of Bilaspur acting as regent for her infant son. Her soldiers kept on devastating the Kangra territory. George Forster passed through the Kangra hills in March, 1783, when the siege was going on. "Unable himself," says Forster, "to repel the enemy, the Mahometan solicited the aid of the Bellaspour Ranee, who, with the spirit of a heroine, afforded speedy and vigorous succour to her neighbour, whose cause she has already revenged by plundering and destroying almost every village of Kangrah; the chief of which now vainly asserts, that the Ranee seeing his country destitute of defence, seized, under the colour of assisting her ally, the occasion of augmenting her own power."¹

Jai Singh retained possession of this fort for nearly four years, and in 1786 he was obliged to surrender it to Sansar Chand in exchange for the territories in the plains which had been captured by the Karoch chief.²

10. *The Search for Adventure*

The Sikhs, the men of the blade, wandered about in the Kangra hills in search of adventure. Forster, in the course of his travels in these hills, frequently came into contact with small bodies of Sikhs roaming everywhere. When he met the first of such Sikh batches on the road he experienced a

¹ Forster, i, 241; *J.P.H.S.*, viii, 1920, pp. 67-71; *Latif*, 309-10; *Cunningham*, 114; *Bute Shah*, 224a-b; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 17-8; *Punjab Chiefs*, 317.

² *J. P. H. S.*, viii, 1920, p. 70.

pleasant encounter: "In token of respect, I had dismounted, and was leading my horse, when a Sicque, a smart fellow, mounted on an active mare, touched me in passing. The high-mettled animal, whether in contempt of me or my horse, perhaps of both, attacked us fiercely from the rear, and in the assault, which was violent, the Sicque fell to the ground."¹

The common road crossed the river Beas at Nadaun and followed a northerly direction; but the country on that side being overrun by the Sikhs, Forster had to deviate westward and journey along the southern bank of the river. Hardly had he advanced a few miles on this route when he came across some iron merchants who had been plundered by the Sikhs, and whose complaints to the Raja had brought them no redress.

On reaching Siba Forster found that the whole district lay "wholly at the mercy of the Sicques, who are, I think, the plainest dealers in the world. The fort of Sebah, standing pleasantly on the brink of a rivulet, lay on our road; and in passing it, I saw two Sicque cavaliers strike a terror into the chief and all his people, though shut up within their fort. They had been sent to collect the tribute which the Sicques have imposed on all the mountain chiefs from the Ganges to Jumbo; and, offended at the delay of the payment, these high-spoken men were holding to the affrightened Hindoos, that style of language, which one of our provincial magistrates would direct at a gypsey, or sturdy beggar."²

A little farther when Forster was riding alone leaving his companions behind he met a Sikh horseman who in a "peremptory manner" inquired his occupation and place of residence. "My answers," says Forster, "were neither explanatory nor gracious, and my departure abrupt, though he had expressed a strong desire of farther communication; and seemed offended at the unconcern of my deportment."³ But Forster escaped molestation from him.

Near Talwara he noticed a body of Sikh horsemen coming

¹ *Forster*, i. 257-8.

² *Ibid.*, 261-2.

³ *Ibid.*, 262-3.

from the opposite direction. It created a serious alarm in the mind of the travellers, and Forster unperceived by his companions concealed his bills and cash in a bush, and took them when the Sikhs had passed out of sight.

As he advanced on the road Forster came across another body of Sikhs. Forster told them that they had been enjoined by their companions who had gone ahead to join them speedily. This adroitness saved them from any molestation by the Sikhs; because believing that they had been spared by their comrades they did not covet their property.¹

11. Jammu

Jammu was under Ranjit Dev from 1750 to 1781. He was a man of great administrative ability. Taking advantage of the confused political state of the Panjab, owing to the decline of the Mughal rule, the Durrani invasions and the rise of the Sikhs, Ranjit Dev extended his authority over all the hills situated between the Chenab and the Ravi, and over some of those lying to the west of the Chenab; while the rest maintained political relations with the Durrani. The boundary of his dominions stretched even into the plains to the northern parts of the modern Sialkot district. He held sway over the country lying north of a line drawn from Dinga in the Chaj Doab to the river Chenab at Kalowal, and from Roras to Sankhatra, even as far as Munda Khail in Shakargarh parganah.²

¹ *Ibid.*, 264-5.

² *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 17.

Ranjit Dev struck coins during the earlier part of his reign in the name of the Mughal Emperors of Delhi; but later on they were struck in his own name. On these coins he used the Bikrami year, but strangely enough retained the year of the reign of Shah Alam II. The following inscription appeared on them:

Obverse رنجیت دیو آباد کرد

سمیت ۱۸۳۱

Reverse ضرب دارالامان جھون سنہ ۲۰

جلوس میمنت مانوس

"The time in which he lived was one of utter lawlessness, yet his

During Ranjit Dev's reign the city of Jammu prospered greatly, and it became a centre of trade both of the plains and hills including Kashmir owing to constant disturbances in the Panjab. Even rich bankers and merchants and high officials of Lahore and Delhi both Hindus and Musalmans found a place of refuge at Jammu. A despatch received by the Governor-General at Calcutta on the 19th April, 1780, states:—"The said Raja is distinguished for his courage and valour and is so just and kind to his ryots that the inhabitants of the Punjab and the Doab (Gangetic) have since the time of Nadir Shah's invasion, always found a safe refuge in his country from the tyranny of unscrupulous adventurers..... The writer knows of no people from Attock to Delhi who live more free from care and fear than those of Jammu."¹

The Raja showed such consideration and regard to the Muslim immigrants as drew praise from George Forster who stayed at Jammu for sometime in 1783:—"Runzeid Deve, the father of the present chief of Jumbo, who deservedly acquired the character of a just and wise ruler, largely contributed to the wealth and importance of Jumbo. Perceiving the benefits which would arise from the residence of Mahometan merchants, he held out to them many encouragements, and observed towards them a disinterested and an honourable conduct. Negative virtues only are expected from an Asiatic despot, and under such a sanction his subjects might deem themselves fortunate; but the chief of Jumbo went farther than the forbearance of injuries; he avowedly protected and indulged his people, particularly the Mahometans, to whom he allotted a certain quarter of the town, which was thence denominated Moghulpour; and that no reserve might appear in his treatment of them, a mosque was erected in the new colony; a liberality of disposition the more conspicuous, and

little state was an abode of peace and safety (دارالامان)."

J. A. S. B., liv, part i, 63, 65.

The year given on the coin seems to be wrong. It corresponds to 1783-4; but Ranjit Dev had died in 1781.

¹ *C. P. C.*, v. 1836.

conferring the greater honour on his memory, as it is the only instance of the like toleration in this part of India, and as the Kashmirians, who chiefly composed his Mahometan subjects, have been, since their conversion, rigorous persecutors of the Hindoos. He was so desirous also of acquiring their confidence and esteem, that when he has been riding through their quarter during the time of prayer, he never failed to stop his horse until the priest had concluded his ritual exclamations. The Hindoos once complained to this chief, that the public wells of the town were defiled by the vessels (made of leather) of the Mahometans, and desired that they might be restricted to the water of the river; but he abruptly dismissed the complaint, saying, that water was a pure element, designed for the general use of mankind, and could not be polluted by the touch of any class of people. An administration so munificent and judicious, at the same time that it enforced the respect of his own subjects, made Jumbo a place of extensive commercial resort, where all descriptions of men experienced, in their persons and property, a full security."¹

Ranjit Dev could not escape the Sikhs. About 1770 he submitted to Jhanda Singh Bhangi, and by his wise policy he warded off the danger for a time. He paid only a few thousand rupees by way of tribute "in a much less proportion than what was levied in the adjacent territories." The Sicques, indeed, aware of the respectable state of the Jumbo force, and the ability of the chief, were contented with the name of tribute."²

¹ Forster, i, 283-5. More than fifty years after the death of Ranjit Dev Baron Charles Hugel also bore the same testimony: "The prosperity of Jammu was at its height under Ranjit Dev, whose mild government extended equal protection to Hindu and Mahomedan while the Panjab was overrun with the horrors of war." Hugel, 70.

Frederick Drew in *The Northern Barrier of India*, III, 40-1 writes:—"A century ago the old regime was flourishing under Raja Ranjit Deo; he is still spoken of with the highest respect as a wise administrator, a just judge, and a tolerant man."

² Forster, i, 286-7. *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 18, puts the sum of tribute at 1½ lakhs; *Khuswaqt Rai*, 155 at 2½ lakhs and *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 4 at one lakh.

On Ranjit Dev's death in 1781¹ he was succeeded by his son Brij Raj Dev, during whose reign the Jammu state came completely under the subjection of the Sikhs for an annual tribute of Rs. 30,000. In his time Jammu was sacked twice by Mahan Singh Sukarchakia who ransacked the state treasury and palaces with as much severity as he fleeced the bankers and merchants of the city. The fortunes of the Sukarchakia *Misl* were thus built on the ruins of this flourishing city.

To check the Sikh encroachments Brij Raj Dev made his last great effort in 1787. He came out to fight against the Bhangi chiefs of the Sialkot district. The forces of both sides met at Ramāl, but without any gain for the Jammu Raja. "There is a small cenotaph in this village which is pointed out as the place where Brij Raj Dev was killed and his forces routed. The event was one of considerable importance, as it marks the date when it may be said the power of the Sikhs was fully established in this sub-montane region, only 25 miles from Jammu, now the capital of Kashmir territory. The whole country added to the hill chiefship during the successful reign of Ranjit Dev was thus at once appropriated by the Sikhs."²

The Durrani Rulers of Afghanistan claimed a nominal supremacy over the hill states. In January, 1797, when Shah Zaman invaded the Panjab, he issued a rescript to Jit Singh of Chamba enjoining him to perform the services of the Diwani (revenue and civil justice) in conjunction with Sampuran Dev of Jammu (a son of Brij Raj Dev). This, however, had no effect, as on his withdrawal to Afghanistan the Sikhs again became supreme.³

¹ Sometime before his death Ranjit Dev planned the conquest of Kashmir; but the agents of the Governor of that province settled terms of peace. About the same time the Raja sent a letter to the Governor-General. C. P. C., vi, 175, dated the 29th May, 1781.

² *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 18; *J. P. H. S.*, viii, 1920, p. 129.

³ *Chamba Museum Catalogue*, 72; *J. P. H. S.*, viii, 1920, p. 129.

CHAPTER IV

INTERNECINE WARFARE

1. *Spirit of Faction*

THE overflowing energy of the Sikhs was not spent so much in expanding their territories as in their civil warfare. The whole Sikh people was termed *Sarbat Khalsa*, which was divided for political and military purposes into twelve *Misls* or confederacies. The Sikh religion, a pure theocracy, permitted no distinction of rank and position among the members of the Khalsa brotherhood. The Sikh Commonwealth was thus founded on perfectly democratic principles. These confederacies therefore possessed ample material for the formation of a mighty republic which might have been the pride of the East as the one in the West that was founded about this time in the United States of America. But there was only one Washington to convert this idea into a reality. This hero and his comrades were inspired by feelings of law, liberty and love of their countrymen.

The Sikhs on the other hand were impelled by motives of self-assertion, self-conceit and self-aggrandizement. The Panjab consequently possessed neither such a man nor such a spirit. The principle of equality inculcated by Guru Gobind Singh was misused by the Sikhs. They degraded the noble teachings of the Guru, and instead of merging their personality in the community they considered that the community existed to serve their own selfish ends. This made each Sikh chief haughty, arrogant and egotistic. Hence each Sikh *Misl* became a centre of rivalry, jealousy and controversy, and a home of contention, conflict and collision. Thus the Sikh democracy resulted in a provincial anarchy, which let loose the forces of disruption, dissipation and dissolution.

This period was not one of conflict between the Sikhs and Musalmans as the latter had been subdued; but one of Sikh against Sikh, Sardar against Sardar and *Misl* against *Misl*. In short, every man's hand was turned against his brother. The armed bands of rival Sikh chiefs preyed upon the country, and whenever they got an opportunity, they carried off cattle and drove away flocks of sheep and goats from one another's territory. Might became the only test of right and in the absence of a general controlling authority the whole country fell a prey to the ambition of rival chiefs struggling for supremacy.

The spirit of faction increased more and more as time passed on, until about the end of the century it became incurable. George Thomas, an Irish adventurer, who personally came into contact with the Sikhs at this time recorded: "Internal commotions and civil strife have of late years generated a spirit of revenge and disunion among the chiefs, which it will take a long time to overcome."¹

The history of these thirty years is therefore made up of endless petty warfare among all the Sikh chiefs each of whom built for himself strong forts which served as centres to harry the neighbouring country. The petty feuds which raged almost daily are of little interest, and such only deserve mention as contributed to produce important changes in the Sikh State.

2. *Fighting at Jammu, 1774*

In 1774 a serious quarrel arose between Ranjit Dev of Jammu and his eldest son Brij Raj Dev. The heir-apparent was of dissolute character and the father, a man of great ability and sound judgment, wanted therefore his younger son Dalel Singh to succeed him. A quarrel arose over this issue which soon developed to fighting. The raw youth not realizing the consequences sought assistance from Charat Singh Sukarchakia and Jai Singh Kanhiya, both

¹ *George Thomas*, 102.

of whom readily assented. The father could not fight with this formidable coalition single-handed, and invited his overlord Jhanda Singh Bhangi to help him.

The united forces of the Sukarchakia and Kanhiya chiefs marched into the hills, and encamped on the banks of the Basantar river a little east of Jammu. Ranjit Dev collected an army of his own as well as of his feudatories such as Chamba, Nurpur, and Basohli in addition to the forces of Jhanda Singh. Skirmishes continued for sometime till one day Charat Singh was killed by the bursting of his own gun which struck him in the forehead.

The loss of Charat Singh was too great for the allies who found it difficult to maintain their position against the powerful Bhangi Chief. Besides, Jai Singh realized that Charat Singh's son Mahan Singh was too young to be a match for Jhanda Singh who was a deadly enemy of the Sukarchakia *Misl*. Jai Singh therefore decided that their safety lay in the death of the Bhangi Sardar. In consequence he bribed a Rangretta Sikh in the service of Jhanda Singh, whom he shot dead from behind while that Sardar was walking in his camp unattended.

Ganda Singh the brother of the deceased succeeded to the leadership of the Bhangi *Misl*. He did not like to continue the fight and retired from Jammu. Jai Singh also returned home with a view to organize the Sukarchakia *Misl*.

Before leaving Jammu, Mahan Singh, though young in years, resorted to a diplomatic trick. He changed turbans with Brij Raj Dev in token of affection which bound them in brotherhood for life, but this privilege he was going to abuse in the fullest measure.¹

¹Jassa Singh Bmud, 200; Gyan Singh, 954-5; Latif, 339-40; Punjab Chiefs, 316-7; Raj Khalsa, iii, 5.

✓ Ranjit Dev in spite of his family dissensions and the Sikh incursions maintained his supremacy over almost all the twenty-two states situated between the Ravi and the Jhelum, and as a result of this the following saying came into use :—

"*Baiyan vich Jammu Sardar hai*".

[Among the twenty-two Jammu is head.]

J. P. H. S., viii, 126.

3. *The Battle of Pathankot, 1775*

The murder of Jhanda Singh was rankling in the mind of Ganda Singh who was watching for an opportunity which soon presented itself to him to declare war upon Jai Singh Kanhiya. Pathankot had been given by Jhanda Singh to Nand Singh,¹ a chief of the Bhangi *Misl*. He died shortly after the Jammu affair, leaving behind a widow and a daughter. According to the custom among the Sikhs the widow was to be taken to wife by the younger brother of the deceased husband, or some other near relative, or a person belonging to the same confederacy. This practice was followed to prevent the lands from going to an enemy. Nand Singh's widow, however, offered her daughter and the estate to Gurbakhsh Singh son of Jai Singh Kanhiya. The proposal was declined for fear of war with the Bhangis ; but he referred the widow to Haqiqat Singh who persuaded his own brother Tara Singh to accept the proffer. Tara Singh proved very unscrupulous. He came to Pathankot, married the girl and received the district of Pathankot in dowry. Shortly afterwards he murdered both the women and became the sole owner of the land.

This greatly incensed Ganda Singh who demanded restitution of Pathankot which was refused. Ganda Singh came to Amritsar and met Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who excited him to fight the Kanhiyas. Thereupon Ganda Singh, Gujar Singh, Lahna Singh, Bhag Singh of Chamyari, Pir Muhammad Khan Chatha, Ranjit Dev of Jammu and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, all advanced against the united forces of Kanhiyas, Sukarchakias and Ahluwalias.

The two armies met at Dinanagar and fought for many days.² After ten days' continuous struggle a calamity fell upon the Bhangis owing to the sudden death of Ganda Singh from illness. His son, Desa Singh, being a minor, was superseded by

¹ *Jassa Singh Binod*, 200, calls him Nodh Singh.

² The author of *Jassa Singh Binod* gives details of the fights in which Kanwar Mohar Singh Ahluwalia greatly distinguished himself.

Charat Singh, a nephew of Ganda Singh. As ill luck would have it the new chief also lost his life in one of the engagements. Consequently Desa Singh was raised to the leadership of the *Misl*. But as the great Sardars who had fought under the renowned Hari Singh, Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh could not be controlled by a lad ; and as all of them were dismayed at the loss of two of their chieftains, they stopped fighting and retired to Amritsar.¹

4. *The Capture of Zahura, 1775*

The long standing rivalry between the two Jassa Singhs who fought on the opposite sides in the late campaign of Pathankot flared up shortly afterwards.

Zahura on the Beas became a scene of battle between Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia in 1775. In the course of fighting Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was wounded by a gunshot, on which he withdrew, and the field was left for Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Zahura was later on given to Baghel Singh Karorsinghia.²

5. *Jassa Singh Ahluwalia Captured and Released, 1776*

Sometime after the chief leader of the Ahluwalia *Misl* fell into the hands of his rival, the Ramgarhia Sardar, who displayed the magnanimity of his character by treating him kindly and setting him free. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia one day went towards the village Nangal to hunt. From the opposite direction Mali Singh, the brother of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, was coming at the head of a contingent of horse. Mali Singh attacked him and in the fight many men lost their lives on the side of the Ahluwalia chief, who was also twice wounded. He became unconscious and fell down from his horse. Mali Singh put him in a palanquin and took him to Srigobindpur.

¹ *Jassa Singh Binod*, 200-3; *Latif*, 298; *Gurdaspur District Gazetteer*, 13; *Khushwaqt Rai*, 124; *Bute Shah*, 213b.

² *Jassa Singh Binod*, 213.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was greatly annoyed at it. Though always at daggers drawn with his rival, he believed in worsting his enemy in the open fight and would not take him unawares. He at once waited upon him and with folded hands expressed his regret saying: "This has occurred on account of the foolishness of Mali Singh. You should consider this place as your own home and excuse the guilt of Mali Singh."

Jassa Singh kept quiet and stayed there for two days. On the third day Jassa Singh Ramgarhia gave him a horse and a shawl by way of his offering at his departure, and under a proper escort sent him to Fatahabad, the seat of his government.

Here Jai Singh Kanhiya, Gujar Singh Bhangi and others came to enquire after his health and to incite him to retaliate upon the Ramgarhias. Jassa Singh said: "I will now armour myself to turn out the Ramgarhias from the country."¹

6. *Expulsion of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, 1776*

Jai Singh Kanhiya made a common cause with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who according to Griffin "swore a mighty oath that he would never loose his turban till he had seized all the Ramgarhia estates".²

The possessions of the Kanhiyas and Ramgarhias lay intermingled both in the Upper Bari Doab and the Upper Jullundur Doab. A quarrel arose between them over the division of revenues of certain territories.

Jai Singh and Haqiqat Singh accompanied by an Ahluwalia contingent attacked Srigobindpur. Jassa Singh put up a stiff resistance, but he was ultimately overpowered and

¹ *Jassa Singh Binod*, 221-2; *Punjab Chiefs*, 172.

Griffin also supports the author of *Jassa Singh Binod*: "Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, who would have been glad enough had his brothers slain his rival, could only release him with rich gifts, when he was brought in as prisoner, for the old Sikh barons had much of the spirit of chivalry". *Punjab Chiefs*, 172.

² *Punjab Chiefs*, 172.

his garrison was expelled from the place. Batala was besieged by Gurbakhsh Singh, son of Jai Singh Kanhiya. Mali Singh came out to fight. His rule being unpopular, the people gave him no help ; on the contrary they supplied provisions and war material to the invaders. The fort was at this time under the charge of Raja Singh, Deva Singh and Tara Chand Brahmin. They secretly opened the gates and admitted the Kanhiya forces into the fort.

The victorious troops then marched upon Kalanaur held by Tara Singh, a brother of Jassa Singh, expelled him from the fort and occupied the place. In this way the allies wrested the whole country from the Ramgarhias who fled to the Jullundur Doab. Kanwar Bhag Singh of the Ahluwalia *Misls* was holding Mahtabkot. He was instructed by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia not to give any molestation to the Ramgarhias, and to assist them in passing across the Sutlej. Their families were allowed to stay at Lekhpur, while the Ramgarhia chiefs and their followers advanced to Hissar district which became their future home for some years.¹

7. *Strife at Jammu, 1782*

The Kanhiya and the Bhangi *Misls* again came into conflict a few years later as a result of an invitation from the Raja of Jammu. Ranjit Dev died in 1781, and was succeeded by his son Brij Raj Dev. He got his brother Dalel Singh² and one of his sons Bhagwant Singh murdered in 1782, and imprisoned Dalel Singh's second son Jit Singh. These cruel deeds and his dissolute character made Brij Raj Dev extremely unpopular among his subjects.

¹Jassa Singh Binod, 232-3; *Rajas of the Punjab*, 512.

From Hissar district Jassa Singh Ramgarhia "extended his ravages up to the very walls of Delhi. Once he penetrated into Delhi itself, and carried off four guns from the Mughal arsenal. The Mirath Nawab agreed to pay him Rs. 10,000 a year on his consenting to leave his district unmolested. He sacked Hissar to punish the governor, who had forcibly carried away two daughters of a Brahmin, and had the girls restored to their father". Latif, 308.

²Sohan Lal, ii, 20, calls him Daler Singh

Brij Raj Dev then displayed anxiety to recover a portion of the Jammu State that had been annexed by the Bhangis. Taking advantage of the keen spirit of rivalry prevailing among the Sikh chiefs, he applied to Haqiqat Singh Kanhiya for assistance. As a result the Bhangis and Kanhiyas were involved in a struggle which ended in victory for the allies. Brij Raj Dev thenceforward became tributary to Haqiqat Singh for an annual sum of Rs. 30,000.¹

8. *The Battle of Dinpur, 1782*

The grouping and regrouping of the Sikh confederacies was taking place frequently. The Kanhiyas made up their differences with the Bhangis, and seized the territory which had been restored to the Jammu Raja. Brij Raj Dev invited assistance from the young Sukarchakia chief, Mahan Singh, his sworn brother by the exchange of turbans. The allied troops of the Bhangi and Kanhiya *Misls* under the leadership of Jai Singh, Haqiqat Singh, Gujar Singh and Karam Singh invaded the territory of Jammu and laid siege to the strong fortress of Dinpur. Finding the opponents rather strong they invited assistance from Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, saying: "We in haste have besieged Dinpur, and the Jammu ruler, Brij Raj Dev has a large army. Sardar Mahan Singh has come to his help. If this place is conquered by your aid, we can maintain our prestige. You have been kind to us before."

At the same time Sobha Ram and Nanak Chand, the confidential agents of Brij Raj Dev and Mahan Singh waited upon the Ahluwalia chief: "You are the chief leader of the *Panth*, and every one expects help from you. We are fighting with Kanhiyas and Bhangis. Let us decide the matter between ourselves, and give no help to them."

Jassa Singh decided to help the Kanhiyas and Bhangis. He despatched Kanwar Bhag Singh at the head of a strong contingent to march straight to Dinpur, while he himself advanced *via* Dera Baba Nanak where he was joined by

¹ *J. P. H. S.*, viii, 1920, p. 127; *Forster*, i, 286.

Gurbakhsh Singh, son of Jai Singh Kanhiya. At a distance of one stage from Dinpur the leaders of the two confederacies waited upon him. Just then arrived the representatives of Jammu Raja and Mahan Singh requesting him not to fight against them. He offered them certain terms which were not accepted by the Raja and his ally.

This led to fighting which continued for several days, and the Jammu forces were compelled to retreat for some distance. At this Jiwan Singh, the commander of the garrison, offered to surrender on condition of security. Jassa Singh, however, wished to satisfy the other party also. He prevailed upon both the parties to make peace. According to the terms the fort was to be retained by the Raja of Jammu, while the neighbouring territory was handed over to Haqiqat Singh.¹

9. Quarrel over the Booty of Jammu

To the misfortune of the Raja of Jammu a further regrouping of Sikh confederacies left him in the lurch. Haqiqat Singh Kanhiya demanded the payment of tribute from Brij Raj Dev after only six months. The Raja depending upon the support of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia protested against this step, offering to pay it at the end of the year. But Mahan Singh, ambitious and unscrupulous as he was, was easily won over by Haqiqat Singh, and both of them decided to punish the Raja.

In accordance with the arrangements already agreed to they marched from their respective head-quarters ; but Mahan Singh reached Jammu earlier. Jammu was a flourishing city, and its people had accumulated great riches through prosperous trade. Finding the Raja and his subjects terrified at his approach, and being tempted by the prospect of great loot Mahan Singh attacked the city. Brij Raj Dev fled to Trikota mountains to the north of Jammu. On his flight the merchants of the city offered a large sum of money on the condition of his sparing the town from the horrors of sack. Mahan Singh

¹Jassa Singh Bind 228-30 ; Latif 342 ; Sahas Tal ii 90

listened to no appeals, fell upon the city and acquired immense booty amounting to two crores of rupees.

The Sikh invasion of Jammu seems to have been just over when Forster visited this city. He writes :—

“It appears that Jumbo continued to increase its power and commerce until the year 1770 the period of Runzeid Deve's death ; when one of his sons, the present chief, contrary to the intention and express will of his father, seized on the government, put to death one of his brothers, the intended successor, and imprisoned another, who having made his escape sought the protection of the Sicques. Pleased in having obtained so favourable a pretext for entering Jumbo, which they attempted in vain during the administration of Runzeid Deve, the Sicques promised to espouse the fugitive's cause with vigour . . . The most valuable division of the Jumbo districts, lay in the plain country, forming part of the Northern Punjab, which, under pretence of affording assistance to the person who lately sought their protection, a body of Sicques have laid waste. They are now prosecuting a vigorous war against the present chief, who, through the defection of many of his people, driven by oppressions to the party of his brother, became unable to make any effectual stand ; and that his ill fortune might be complete, he called into his aid, a party of Sicque mercenaries, commanded by Mhah Sing, a powerful officer in that quarter, who has firmly established his authority at Jumbo, and has erected a fort at the south entrance of the principal pass leading into the Punjab. For defraying the expense incurred by the Sicque troops, the Jumbo chief has made rigorous demands on the native inhabitants of the city, and is now throwing an eye on the foreign merchants ; who, dreading his disposition and necessities, have taken a general alarm.”¹

After depositing the booty at Ramnagar, Mahan Singh visited Amritsar to make his offerings at Hari Mandir. There

¹ Forster, i, 286-7.

Ranjit Dev died in 1781, and not in 1770 as stated by Forster.

he visited Jai Singh Kanhiya and paid his homage to him.

The old chief severely reprimanded Mahan Singh for appropriating the entire booty of Jammu, and demanded half of it as the share of Haqiqat Singh who could not reach Jammu in time. Mahan Singh was not going to part with any portion of the booty ; but otherwise he tried his best to please him. He approached Jai Singh with a tray of sweetmeats and supplicated forgiveness. The haughty chief who was resting in bed drew a sheet over him, and dismissed him insultingly saying : " Be off, you *Bhagtia* (A dancing boy) ! I have no time to listen to your lame excuses."

Mahan Singh was stung to fury, and he resolved on revenge. He escaped from Amritsar where Jai Singh reigned supreme, and began to make preparations.

Jai Singh decided to teach a lesson to the young sapling who was flouting at his old patron. He plundered a few places including Rasulpur and Mandiala belonging to Mahan Singh. Wazir Singh and Bhagwan Singh Nakai connected with Mahan Singh were also forced to submit. Mahan Singh engaged him in the battle of Majitha, in which Jai Singh was worsted, and he fled across the Beas.

Meanwhile Mahan Singh won over to his side Raja Sansar Chand and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who returned to secure possession of his lost territories. The allied forces marched upon Batala, the head-quarters of Jai Singh Kanhiya. Both the armies met at Achal, eight miles from Batala. In the thick of the battle Gurbakhsh Singh, the only son of Jai Singh Kanhiya, was shot dead. This broke the heart of Jai Singh, and " after a hand to hand combat with his adversaries, he burst into tears, emptied his quiver of its arrows, and, dismounting from his horse, exposed himself to the enemy's fire. Such was the respect for the old veteran that none dared approach him in his grief, and all quietly withdrew."¹

¹ *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 13 ; *J. P. H. S.*, viii, 1920, p. 129; *Rajas of the Punjab*, 517-8 ; *Punjab Chiefs*, 173 ; *Sohan Lal*, ii, 21-2 ; *Latif*, 311, 342-4.

Jai Singh raised a monument over the remains of his son Gurbakhsh Singh to the north of the town of Batala. *Latif*, 311.

10. The Battle of Batala, 1787

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia having recovered his lost territory set up his head-quarters at Batala, which he fortified by a brick wall thirty feet high and twenty-one feet broad. Jai Singh Kanhiya, however, was chafing under the loss of Batala. He managed to win the support of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia, and reconciled Sansar Chand. Assisted by these two chiefs as well as by the Rajas of Chamba and Nurpur, Jai Singh attacked Batala. Jassa Singh shut himself up in the city, and with the active co-operation of the inhabitants foiled the efforts of the besiegers, who after an engagement of twenty-one days raised the siege.¹

11. The Siege of Sodhra, 1791

Before concluding this chapter one more conflict which took place between the Bhangis and the Sukarchakias may be related. Gujar Singh Bhangi had three sons, Sukha Singh, Sahib Singh and Fatah Singh. A quarrel arose between the first two brothers, eventually leading to a fight in which the eldest son lost his life. Gujar Singh was deeply grieved, and he marched to Gujrat, the head-quarters of Sahib Singh, to punish him. Sahib Singh got ready to oppose his father, but they were reconciled. He again incurred his father's displeasure. One of the leaders of the Chatha tribe against whom Mahan Singh Sukarchakia was waging a campaign took shelter with Sahib Singh. Against his father's instructions he delivered the Chatha chief to Mahan Singh, his own brother-in-law. Gujar Singh was deeply grieved, and when he reprimanded Sahib Singh, he openly insulted and disgraced his father. Gujar Singh gave most of his possessions to Fatah Singh and died broken-hearted in 1788 at Lahore.

Up to this time Sahib Singh had been supported in his refractory attitude by Mahan Singh. In 1789 Sahib Singh seized all the territories of his brother who sought

¹ Latif, 312.

refuge with Mahan Singh. In the quarrel between the brothers Mahan Singh found an opportunity to aggrandize himself. The Sukarchakia Sardar therefore publicly espoused the cause of Fatah Singh. Hostilities broke out between them which continued for a couple of years.

In 1791 Mahan Singh laid siege to the fort of Sodhra held by Sahib Singh. Mahan Singh who had no defeat to his account so far must have succeeded in capturing the place, but just at this time he was deserted by his ally Jodh Singh of Wazirabad. On the other side Sahib Singh's resources were considerably increased by reinforcement sent by Karam Singh Dulu, the chief of Chiniot. Fighting was going on at its height when one day it so happened that Mahan Singh fainted on his elephant in the battle-field. The driver finding his master in danger returned to the camp. His soldiers considered this a signal to stop fighting, and retired in disorder. To the great relief of Sahib Singh who lay shut up in the fort the siege was raised. Mahan Singh was brought to Gujranwala, where he died three days afterwards.¹

¹ *Atif*, 304, 344 ; *Gujrat District Gazetteer*, 16 ; *Sohan Lal*, ii, 26-7.

CHAPTER V

CONFLICT WITH SHAH ZAMAN, 1793—1795

1. *Position of the Sikhs in General*

THE Sikhs were still busy in intestine hostilities when they were called upon to contend with a menace of a very serious nature. This was the invasion of Shah Zaman, the grandson of the celebrated Ahmad Shah Durrani, who attempted to repeat the exploits of his grandfather. Before giving an account of their conflict with the Afghan monarch it appears appropriate to study the material resources of the notable Sikh chiefs who played their part in the last act of the drama enacted in this country by foreign invaders.

The Sikhs possessed plenty of wealth, territory, artillery, troops and forts. Besides, their subjects whether Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs were happy and contented under their rule. "The ryots of the *Subah* of Lahore," says Ghulam Sarwar, "who are of the Sikhs and Afghans, a nation of soldiers, pay one-fourth part of the produce of their lands; payment in cash is no longer in use, but the usage above-mentioned is prevalent. Hence the ryots of the *Subah* of Lahore are contented and happy."¹

¹ This account is based on the detailed papers submitted to the British Resident at Lucknow by Ghulam Sarwar, an English intelligencer, who passed right across the Panjab in 1793 on his way to Kabul and back again in 1795. His statements appear to be authentic as admitted by the Governor-General and are in agreement with other contemporary authorities in general.

The original papers of Ghulam Sarwar with the exception of one could not be traced. Hence their translation into English was consulted. This is evidently full of mistakes, some of which in spite of the writer's best efforts could not be corrected.

Cf. *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 7th July, 1797, No.

On the other hand complete disunity and disagreement prevailed among the Sikh chiefs, and they were wasting their energy and resources in mutual warfare. "There is the greatest enmity among them and continual war about disputed boundary. They have no union whatever. Everyone wishes the destruction of his neighbour and seeks to extirpate him. The old chiefs, who were experienced in war and had fought against Ahmad Shah are all dead, and their children are untried."¹

2. *Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia*

It is surprising to find from contemporary evidence that Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia, though only thirteen years of age, was considered the most powerful Sikh chief in the trans-Sutlej territory. His domains yielded him an annual revenue of thirty lakhs of rupees, and consisted of the following *parganahs*: Dhanni, Keep² (Gheb), Ghonwun [Ghonowāl=4 miles north of Rāmdās on the Ravi], Wazirabad, Pind Dadan Khan,³ Dhungeh (Dinga,⁴ 10 miles south of the Jhelum river), Goojera (Gojra in Lyallpur District?), Rasulnagar No. 1 and No. 2, Gujranwala, Eminabad, Sahiwal, Rohtras, and Timaunet (Chiniot?). Besides, the Raja of Jammu was under his suzerainty.

¹ Cf. Malet's letter to the Court of Directors, dated Poona, 5th February, 1794, in *P. R. C.*, 11, 206

² The author of *Husain Shahi* wrote in 1796: "Dhanni Gheb — Revenue is realised by Khataks. The subjects and nobles of this territory are all Musalmans. They keep this country under their control by the sword. Whenever a Sikh force comes to fight them, they pay tribute. The Chief of these people is called Raja Mahdi." *Husain Shahi*, 234.

³ The same author says: "Pind Dadar Khan is under the Sikhs. The income from salt amounts to 2½ lakhs of rupees annually. In Mughal times the income was greater. Ranjit Singh, son of Mahan Singh is the best of the Sikh chiefs of the neighbourhood. He has the fort, the city and the salt mines in his possession. In this Doab there are about six thousand Sikh horse and nearly the same number of foot." *Ibid.*, 235.

⁴ The local chief of this place was Khudadad Khan Khattar, who had in his service a body of 3,000 horse and 1,700 foot. *Ibid.*, 236.

Ranjit Singh possessed eighteen forts of note in addition to many petty strongholds. The fort of Rasulnagar was strong and capable of resisting a siege, though it was built of mud. Eight guns were mounted on its walls. Its circumference was one *kos*. Some of the members of Ranjit Singh's family lived there.¹

The fort of Sayyidnagar was strong, mud-built and capable of sustaining a siege. Four guns were mounted on it. Its circumference was about a *kos*.²

The fort of Gunjranwala was made of mud. It mounted eight guns. Its circumference was one *kos*. Some other members of Ranjit Singh's family resided in this fort.

The fort of Rohtas, constructed of stone, was situated on a hill, and its circumference was about four *kos*. It had no guns.³

The fort of Keep (Gheb=Pindi Gheb in Rawalpindi District) was made of stone and mud. It had ~~no~~ guns.

The fort of Bhoom (Bhaun?=25 miles north-west of Pind Dadan Khan) was made of mud. It was of middling size and had no guns.

The fort of Jirgwaun (Turkwal?=50 miles west of Jhelum) was made of mud. It was of middling size and had no guns.

The fort of Ghose (Chot?=10 miles south of Pind Dadan Khan) was built of stone. It stood on a hill, was of middling size, and had no guns.

The fort of Dulloor (Kalur?=8 miles west of the Chenab opposite Pindi Bhatian) was built of stone. It stood on an eminence, was large in size, and mounted four small guns.

The fort of Dadun (Pind Dadan Khan) was mud-built. It was large, strong and mounted two guns.

The fort of Sungoo (Sanghoi Khas?=8 miles south of Jhelum on the western bank of the river) was made of mud. It was of middling size and had no guns.

¹ The fort of Rasulnagar had four large and three small gateways.

² The fort of Sayyidnagar had two large and two small gateways.

³ The fort of Rohtas had twelve gateways.

The fort of Gohar (Gojra ?) was built of mud. It was of middling size and without any guns.

The fort of Manchar was mud-built. It was very strong, but was left neglected.

The fort of Ahmadnagar (12 miles south-west of Wazirabad) was made of mud. It was strong but had no guns.

The fort of Alipur (35 miles east of Gujranwala) was built of mud. It was very strong, but without any guns.

The fort of Rasulpur (20 miles west of Gujrat) was of mud. It was strong and of middling size.

The fort of Wazirabad was brick-built, and had no guns.

The fort of Kunjah (7 miles west of Gujrat) was made of bricks and mounted two guns.

As regards the military force of Ranjit Singh he had a body of 1,200 horse and 2,000 foot in permanent employment. In case of an emergency he could raise 11,000 horse and 6,000 foot. Besides, several feudal chiefs had to supply him contingents varying in strength, such as Joti Singh, 1,000 horse; Fatah Singh Dhari, 1,000 horse; Ahmad Khan Afghan, 1,000 horse; Fatah Khan Afghan, 100 horse, and Laiq Missar, 100 horse. Dat Singh was his commander-in-chief, Gulab Khan Afghan commanded the Najib battalion of 1,000 foot and Ghaus Khan, the *Darogha* of the *Topkhana*, commanded 1,000 Afghan infantry with six guns.¹

3. *Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat*

Sahib Singh Bhangi, the son of Gujar Singh of Lahore, was an independent ruler of Gujrat. His territory yielded an annual revenue of thirteen lakhs of rupees. The following *parganahs* were included in his territory: Polurvaur (Phularwan=10 miles south of Bhera), Mirpur (25 miles

¹ Browne estimated the military strength of Ranjit Singh's father Mahan Singh in 1787 at 15,000 horse and 5,000 foot in the Rechna Doab, and about 5,000 horse and foot in the Chaj and Sind Sagar Doabs; while Imam-ud-din put it at about 22,000 horse and foot. *India Tracts*, ii, (xii); *Husain Shahi*, 235, 237.

north of Jhelum), Gujrat, Pasrur and Sodhra (4 miles north-east of Wazirabad).

Sahib Singh owned twelve forts. Barwala was a brick-built fort. Its circumference was nearly two *kos*. It had no guns. Phularwan, Kooleena (Galiana? = 15 miles south-east of Jhelum), Sook (Hast? = 20 miles west of Gujrat), Mirpur, Chaomukh, Sodhra, Kauman Waulah (Karianwala? = 16 miles north-east of Gujrat), Lakhanwal (12 miles north-east of Gujrat) and Jammulle (Jamki? = 16 miles east of Wazirabad) were all built of mud and had no guns. The fort of Mangla (16 miles north of Jhelum) was situated on a hill. It was made of stone, and was large in size.

Sahib Singh had a body of 2,000 horse in permanent employment, but when occasion arose he could raise a force of 8,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry. The following commanders served under him:—*Milkha Singh* of Rawalpindi with 1,200 horse, *Rana Singh Lung* with 200 horse and *Bundu Khan Gheba* with 600 horse.¹

4. *Karam Singh Bhangi Dulu*

Karam Singh Bhangi Dulu, the chief of Jhang Siyal commanded about 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry as a permanent force, and on occasions could muster 6,000 horse and 3,000 foot. He had eight strong forts in his territory that yielded him nearly fourteen lakhs of rupees every year.

5. *Karam Singh Dodia*

Karam Singh Dodia of Jessranwaun (Jastarwal)² retained permanently 500 cavalry and 1,000 infantry. He possessed ten pieces of cannon, eight wall pieces and fifty camel guns. In an emergency he could assemble a force of 2,000 horse and 1,000 foot. His country yielded about eight lakhs of rupees

¹ Browne estimated the Sikh forces in the forts of Gujrat and Rohtas at 7,500 horse and 2,500 foot. Imam-ud-din Husaini computed Sahib Singh's military strength at 4,000 horse and 4,000 foot. *India Tracts*, ii, (xii); *Husain Shahi*, 237.

² *Supra*, 8.

as annual revenues. He had several forts such as Jessran-waun (Jastarwal) and Summerhaulah (?), both brick-built, and Gopal(?), Samoowal(?) and Bopalwallah(?), all made of mud.

6. *Sahib Singh, the Chief of Sialkot*

Sahib Singh of Sialkot had a permanent force of 1,500 horse and foot, and in an emergency could raise a body of 3,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry. He possessed four pieces of cannon and six wall pieces. His territory brought him an annual income of about nine lakhs of rupees.

7. *The Lahore Chiefs*

Lahna Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh (son of Sobha Singh), retained a permanent body of 3,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry, and on occasions could muster a force of 7,000 horse and 4,000 foot. Their country yielded about fifteen lakhs of rupees per year.¹

8. *Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amritsar*

Gulab Singh possessed a body of 600 cavalry; but in an emergency he could raise a force of 4,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry. He had four pieces of cannon and six wall pieces. His territory yielded him about ten lakhs of rupees as annual revenue.

9. *The Sikh Chiefs of the Jullundur Doab*

Ghulam Sarwar mentions nothing about the Sikh chiefs in the Jullundur Doab. Imam-ud-din states that Tara Singh Ghaiba and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia were the most notable chiefs of this Doab, and the total strength of the Sikh forces was about 24,000 horse and foot. Browne's

¹ Browne computed the forces of the Lahore Chiefs at 22,150 horse and 8,050 foot; while the estimate of Imam-ud-din Husaini was at about 8,000 cavalry and the same number of infantry. *India Tracts*, ii, (xh); *Husain Shahi*, 239

figures stand as follows :—

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Baghel Singh of Nurmahal | 750 horse and | 250 foot. |
| Tara Singh Ghaiba of Nakodar | ... 2,250 | 750 |
| Jassa Singh Ramgarhia | ... 3,000 | 1,000 |
| Tara Singh Kakar | ... 375 | 125 |
| Khushhal Singh of Garhshankar | ... 150 | 50 |
| Maha Singh of Jullundur | 750 | 250 |
| Jassa Singh of Kapurthala | 3,000 | 1,000 |
| Total ¹ | ... 10,275 | 3,425 |
| | | =13,700. |

10. Total Military Strength of the Trans-Sutlej Sikhs

As regards the total military strength of the Trans-Sutlej Sikhs various estimates are given by contemporary authorities; but there is not much difference among them. Browne estimated it at 73,900 both horse and foot; Ghulam Sarwar put it at 68,000; while Imam-ud-din computed it at 70,000. The author of *Haqiqat* on page 35 put it at about 50,000 horse and a large body of infantry. James Rennell believed the total strength of Sikh cavalry to be 100,000, half of which can safely be allowed to the trans-Sutlej Sikhs.²

11. Ambitious Schemes of Shah Zaman

Shah Zaman succeeded³ to the throne of Afghanistan on the 18th May, 1793, after the death of his father Timur Shah. He was a young man of twenty-three at the time of his succession. There were several revolts against him, but he cleverly suppressed them all. The greatest need of the hour was the task of consolidating the loose parts of the Durrani kingdom. He, however, chose to strike the imagination of

¹ *Husain Shahi*, 240; *India Tracts*, ii, (xii).

² *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan*, cxxii.

³ For the condition of Afghanistan at Shah Zaman's accession and for the Shah's material resources in men and money see the author's *Studies in Later Mughal History*, pp. 265-279.

his people by the more glorious achievements in an outer field. He cherished hopes of an Indian Empire ;¹ but his talents were not equal to his ambitious projects, and he met with little success. His expeditions not only proved fruitless, but also cost him his crown.

12. *Afghan Agents in India*

Shah Zaman deputed several emissaries to the courts of influential Indian chiefs to excite general alarm by giving exaggerated reports of the Afghan forces. Ghulam Muhammad left Kabul shortly after the Shah's accession, and waited on the Mughal Emperor and Maratha Sardars. Shah Alam II granted to Ghulam Muhammad a *khilat* of three pieces and Rs. 500 for his travelling expenses. Gopal Rao Raghunath on behalf of Sindhia provided him with twenty-one robes of honour and two elephants for his master ; while a *khilat* of four pieces and Rs. 5,000 were given to the agent.²

Ibrahim Beg, another ambassador of the Shah, brought letters for the Nawab Wazir of Oudh and Edward Otto Ives, the British Resident at Lucknow, and in return received robes of honour. The envoy presented the Nawab with a *khilat* and three horses on behalf of his master and received Rs. 5,000 for his travelling expenses.³

The Governor-General was in the know of the Afghan agent's activities, and he wanted to maintain friendly relations with the Afghan monarch. He therefore addressed two letters to Shah Zaman, one of condolence on the death of his father, and the other of congratulations on his accession to the throne. These letters were accompanied by presents.⁴

¹ Once Shah Zaman remarked in his court that India offered a free field to the invader but nobody was prepared to undertake the conquest of that country.

” بطرف هندوستان کہ خالی میدان است کسی قصد نمی کند ”

—*Akhbarat British Museum*, Or, 4609, folio 96b

² *Dilliyethil*, ii, 67, 69, 97, 115.

³ *Ibid.*, 68, 91.

⁴ *Imperial Records, Persian Department, English Correspondence*, No. 17, dated Calcutta, 12th December, 1793.

13. *Shah Zaman marches to India, December, 1793*

In view of the favourable reports of his agents, and being goaded by some Indian Princes,¹ Shah Zaman decided upon an invasion of India.

He issued orders to the Governor of Peshawar to build a bridge of boats on the Indus at Attock, gathered troops and left Kabul on the 15th December, 1793.²

The Shah halted at Peshawar for some time to mature his plans for reaching Delhi. Two routes were open to him. The easier and shorter road passed through Lahore; but it was dominated by the Sikhs. The safer way was *via* Multan, Bahawalpur and Bikaner; but it was longer and more tedious.³

Shah Zaman directed his general Payendah Khan to reconnoitre the strategic positions of the Sikhs. The leader of the advance-guard crossed the Indus at Attock with 5,000 men, and advanced for thirty miles. At this place a Sikh contingent opposed the invaders with a view to check their progress. The skirmish ended in a victory for the Afghans. From here the vanguard was recalled. This unexpected and hasty action was probably the result of the Shah's fears of strong resistance on the part of the Sikhs.⁴

14. *Tour through the Trans-Indus Territory*

Before attacking the Sikhs it was considered necessary to consolidate his rule in the Indian provinces of the Shah's dominions. This was a step in the right direction. Shah Zaman did not yield to the offer of Ahsan Bakht of visiting Ranjit Singh who lay encamped at Jhang to secure his

¹ Mirza Ahsan Bakht, a scion of the royal family of Delhi, pressed the Shah to invade India. The ambassador of Tipu Sultan who was then in Kabul also instigated him by holding out tempting offers of money.

² *Dilliyethil*, ii, 80, dated the 27th December, 1793.

³ *P R.C.*, ii, 315.

⁴ *Dilliyethil*, ii, 71, 72, 76, 88; *Maheshwar*, ii, 249; *Elphinstone*, 565; *Hough*, 374.

co-cooperation for a safe passage.¹

Shah Zaman proceeded towards the Derajat, where he was waited upon by Faizullah Khan, the son of Bahawal Khan, and Muzaffar Khan, the Governor of Multan. Ghulam Nabi Letti, the chief of Bhakar and Leiah paid homage to the Shah. He was in arrears of his revenues by Rs. 120,000. He had no money at the moment, and through the interposition of Muzaffar Khan, it was settled that he should give five hundred camels in lieu of that sum. As he was unable to comply with this demand also, he was obliged to make over his grandson, Ghulam Ali, a ten year old lad, as a hostage.² The Amirs of Sind were compelled later on to pay twenty-four lakhs of rupees of the tribute due from them.

Shah Zaman then returned to Peshawar, and despatched Payendah Khan to Kashmir to secure submission of the Governor and realize tribute. The Afghan general seized the Governor who was brought to the Shah. Abdullah Khan Alkozai was appointed to the post of the Governor of Kashmir.³

15. Prince Humayun Captured

Shah Zaman was still at Peshawar when Prince Humayun fell into his hands. Humayun, a brother of the Shah, was in open rebellion, and was chased from place to place by the Shah's spies. He fled from Afghanistan, and passing through the Bora Pass with his family and servants numbering about a hundred appeared at Leiah in order to escape to Kashmir. He was resting under a tree at a well, when Muhammad Khan Sadozai, the officer of the place, fell upon him. In the action

¹ Dilliyethi, ii, 104.

² Ghulam Nabi failed in supplying the stipulated number of camels. His grandson was advised by his Hindu guardian to steal his way into the Wazir's harem and to weep and cry before the women. This moved the heart of the Minister's chief wife, and the boy was allowed to go back home. *Shahamat Ali*, 86.

³ *Tarikh-i-Sultani*, 167; *Elphinstone*, 566; *Dilliyethi*, ii, 104; *Shahamat Ali*, 85-6.

Humayūn's favourite son Ahmad was killed. This broke the Prince's heart; and out of despair he clung to his corpse. He was at once arrested, and all of his companions were taken prisoners. They were sent to Shah Zaman who blinded his brother, and promoted Muhammad Khan to the governorship of Derah Ismail Khan.

The Shah then returned to Kabul, where he again set to the task of adopting proper measures for another invasion of India.¹

16. *Preparations for the Second Invasion*

Shah Zaman sent several agents to India to incite Muslim chiefs to join him against the Sikhs and Marathas. He sent letters to the Nizam of Hyderabad and also to the Governor-General in November, 1794, which was received at Calcutta on the 6th October, 1795.²

About the middle of 1795, Shah Zaman's brother Prince Mahmud revolted at Herat.³ Shah Zaman led an expedition against him; but on his submission he reinstated him in the governorship of the province.

On his return to Kabul he was waited upon by Mirza Ahsan Bakht and Jilani Khan son of ex-minister Ghazi-uddin Khan, who urged him to invade India.⁴

About the same time Ghulam Muhammad Khan, elder brother of Ahmad Ali Khan, the Rohilla chief of Rampur, who was offended at the succession of his younger brother, and was instigated by Nawab Asaf-ud-daulah of Luchnow, went to

¹ *Dilliyethil*, ii, 66, 68, 71, 86, 115; *Husain Shahi*, 174-7; *Tariikh-i-Sultani*, 164-5; *Elphinstone*, 567; *Shahamat Ali*, 88-9; *Akhbarat British Museum*, Or, 4608, folios 33a-b.

² *P. R. C.*, ii, 383-4, Kirkpatrick to Sir John Shore, dated Hyderabad, 22nd September, 1795.

³ On the 28th May, 1795, it was recorded in the *Calcutta Gazette* that Shah Zaman "meditated an incursion into Hindustan, but had been prevented for the present by the hostility of his brothers who have possession of Herat." *Seton-Karr*, ii, 413.

⁴ *British Museum, Persian Akhbarat*, Or, 4609, folio 96b.

Kabul to induce Shah Zaman to invade India and to reinstate him in office.¹

Besides, Shah Alam II was in regular correspondence with Shah Zaman. He was pressing the Shah to invade India and to relieve him of the Maratha control. The Emperor was keeping himself regularly in touch with the Court of Kabul.²

The Durrani monarch allured by the representations of these chiefs and impelled by his own sentiments resolved on a campaign into India. Before leaving Afghanistan he strengthened his position by marrying his son to the daughter of Mahmud Shah, the ruler of Herat, and Mahmud's son was married to his own daughter. By these alliances he thought to remove the possible danger of rebellion in his absence from the country.³

17. *Advance to Peshawar*

Shah Zaman left Kabul on the 3rd November, 1795. He gave out that he was going on a hunting expedition to Shakardara ; but from there he quietly marched to Peshawar. This he did with a view not to cause alarm for fear of a revolt in his absence.

From Peshawar he sent Ahsan Bakht to Multan to collect men and money. One contingent of the advance-guard was permitted to cross the Indus, and another was instructed to remain on the western bank of the same river. The Sikhs fought with the advance-guard and drove it back across the river.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, 125a-b ; *Shahamat Ali*, 89-90.

² Shah Alam II was extremely anxious to see Shah Zaman in Delhi. On the 24th September, 1795 he remarked : "Zaman Shah intends invading India every year ; but owing to disturbances in his own country has no time to spare for this side." On a subsequent occasion he said : "Nobody invades India which has no opposition to offer."

British Museum Persian Akhbarat, Or, 4609, folios 89b, 90a, 96b, 125a-b ; *Rieu*, i, *Additional*, 24,036, folios 196b, 197a, 259a.

³ *British Museum Persian Akhbarat*, Or, 4609, folios 13a-b ; Or, 24,036, folios 196b-197a.

⁴ *Rieu*, i, *Additional*, 24,036, folios 439a-b.

18. *Ranjit Singh's Diplomacy*

This success was achieved by the Sikhs against a small Durrani force. Disunited as the Sikhs were, they knew it fully well that they would not be able to check the advance of the whole Afghan army. Most of the Sikh chiefs looked only to their own individual interests. The only exception was in the case of Ranjit Singh who regarded the problem of the foreign invasion from national point of view. In his opinion successful penetration of the invader was disgraceful to all Indians in general and to the Sikhs in particular, as they controlled the north-west frontier.

It therefore fell to Ranjit Singh to take proper steps to guard the frontiers of the Panjab. He thought of inviting assistance from Daulat Rao Sindhia who was the most prominent chief in northern India. It was a clever trick of diplomacy on the part of an orphan lad of fifteen surrounded on all sides by intrigue and treachery. As he expected all other Sikh chiefs were bound to join him against the invader in case of the advance of Maratha troops. In order to put pressure upon Sindhia he also wrote to Shah Nizam-ud-din of Delhi, a staunch friend of the Maratha chief. But nothing came out of these negotiations.¹

19. *Capture of Rohtas*

Shah Zaman reached Hasan Abdal, 80 miles from Peshawar in three marches. He set up his head-quarter there, and detached a strong contingent of troops under Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi to seize the fort of Rohtas. The Sikhs had receded before the Shah, and had come to no conflict so far with Shah Zaman. Rohtas was the only outpost of the Sikhs held by Ranjit Singh's men. This chief was playing his game cleverly, and avoided an open conflict with the Afghan forces. At his bidding the Sikh garrison took to flight and Rohtas fell into the hands of the Durrani army.

¹ *Ibid.*, 477b-478a, 598a.

The Sikhs lay encamped at Pind Dadan Khan, where they were attacked by the Afghans. After a little fighting the Sikhs crossed the Jhelum, and gathered again in a large number on the southern bank of the river. Another body of the Sikhs assembled at Wazirabad on the Chenab.¹

20. Retreat to Afghanistan

Shah Zaman had stayed at Hasan Abdal only for a week, when his attention was drawn to an insurrection raised by Mahmud at Herat. It was also reported that Agha Muhammad Khan Kajar, the King of Iran, had invaded the western part of Afghanistan at the instigation of Mahmud.

This alarmed Shah Zaman greatly and he at once decided to give up his Indian campaign. He retreated so speedily that he reached Peshawar in two marches on the 3rd January, 1796.²

¹ It was on the 23rd January, 1796, that the news of the fall of Rohtas reached Delhi. *Delhi Chronicle*, 434; *Akhbarat British Museum*, Or, 4,608, folios 200a-b, 201b.

The people were taking to flight from the plains situated on the route of the invader; and the means of conveyance were in such a great demand that in Amritsar a bullock cart was not available even for one hundred rupees.

Akhbarat British Museum, Or, 4,608, folio 163a.

The Sikhs escorted the public safely to hills and other places of security.

"رفیت را مردمان همراه داده بخیریت رسانیده می دهند"

Ibid., 230b.

² *Ibid.*, 265a, 274b, 280a; Rieu, i, *Additional*, 593a-b; *Husain Shahi*, 177-8; *Elphinstone*, 569-70.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAHORE CAMPAIGN, 1796—1797

1. *Afghan Messengers in India, July, 1796*

THE first two invasions of Shah Zaman proved a failure ; but he did not relinquish his designs for a further invasion of India. As a matter of fact the conquest and riches of this country had the most predominating influence on his mind ; and he never got rid of the luring but imaginary picture of becoming a conqueror of India until he lost his kingdom.

Shortly after his return to Kabul Shah Zaman sent his agents to India to win over some of the Indian princes of note to co-operate with him in vanquishing the Sikhs, who stood as a great barrier between him and the rich Gangetic plain.

One of his emissaries arrived at Delhi probably in July, 1796, waited upon Shah Alam and presented his credentials. He then delivered the Shah's letter to Daulat Rao Sindhia in which the Afghan monarch professed great friendship for the Marathas, promising not to disturb his administration of the Mughal Empire, and declaring that his conquests would be confined to the territories of the Sikhs.¹

2. *Negotiations with the Sikhs*

Shah Zaman opened negotiations with the Sikhs also. He

¹ *Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799*, William Palmer to the Governor-General, dated at Fatahgarh, 4th August and 26th August, 1796. Palmer met this ambassador. On this occasion Palmer learnt that two Sayyids disguised as beggars brought a letter from Tipu Sultan in the hollow of a bamboo stick and delivered it to the Shah's agent.

Ibid., 3rd November, 1796.

sent a special messenger to the Sikh chiefs asking them not to molest his troops and impede his progress to Delhi in their own interest for the safety of life, honour and property. The Sikh *Sardars* expressed their willingness to allow him a safe passage through the Panjab on the condition of the Shah's promising to part with "a large portion of plunder" which he would bring from Delhi. Another messenger visited Ranjit Singh demanding from him presents for the Afghan monarch and an undertaking to help the Shah in passing through his country. Ranjit Singh replied that his presents would await the invader in the field of battle.¹

3. Preparations at Home •

It was about the middle of the year 1796 that Shah Zaman commenced preparations for the invasion. His only fear that could disturb his plans was an internal commotion, and the weakest spot in his dominions was Herat where his step-brother Mahmud was the ruler. He therefore sent his brother Shuja-ul-Mulk and his chief minister Sher Muhammad Khan to Herat in August, 1796 to reconcile Mahmud. Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi was despatched to Peshawar to collect troops. A special messenger went to Amir Mahmud son of Nasir Khan of Baluchistan to recruit troops. Another agent visited Kandahar, whilst some messengers went to Derajat, Multan and Bahawalpur. Instructions were issued to Mir Fatah Ali, the Governor of Sind, to be ready with 10,000 horse and foot to join the Shah.

No difficulty was experienced in collecting troops as Sheikh Rahim Ali, the British intelligencer sent to Kabul, wrote that "the sepoys of this country are ready to march towards Hind without pay merely on the chance of plunder." But the Afghans were afraid of the Sikhs; and they required assurance for their proper protection while passing across the Panjab.

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, Nos. 336, 402, 547; *Political Proceedings, Foreign Department*, 28th October, 1796, No. 22 *Secret Letters to Court, 1794-1796*, Vol. X, 360-1.

By September troops began to pour into Kabul from all parts of his dominions. The total strength of the Durrani army was computed at about 80,000 horse and foot, sixty-three pieces of cannon and 700 pieces of camel artillery.¹

4. *Objects of the Invasion*

Shah Zaman had several objects in view in undertaking this expedition on such a grand scale. He wanted to win the glory of rescuing the Mughal Empire from the domination of the Marathas.² He wished to retain his overlordship over the Panjab, which he was prepared to leave with the Sikhs if they could agree to pay him tribute. He desired to replenish his exhausted treasury. Lastly, he intended to marry the daughter of Prince Akbar Shah whom he wanted to be acknowledged the successor to Shah Alam II.³

5. *The Policy of the Governor-General*

It would not be out of place here to review the position of various notable political powers of northern India with regard to their policy towards the invader. As the news of the impending Durrani invasion was assuming more alarming appearance, the anxiety of some of the Indian powers was

¹ *Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799*, Palmer to the Governor-General, dated 3rd November, 1796; *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 71; *Political Proceedings*, 18th December, 1796, No. 12.

The camel artillery called *zamburaks* were long swivels of one or two pounds ball. Two of them were carried on the back of a camel. When they were to be brought into play, the camel was made to kneel on the ground, and to prevent his rising, each leg was fastened, bent as it was, with a cord.

² Shah Zaman on one occasion used the following expression regarding the Marathas:—

”سلطنت ہندوستان در تصرف کفار نہایت تباہ است“

[The Empire of India is in a very ruinous condition owing to its occupation by the infidels.]

Akhbarat British Museum, Or, 4609, folio 125b.

³ *Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799*, Palmer to the Governor-General, dated Fatahgarh, 4th August and 8th October, 1796.

growing greater. The Governor-General knew that Shah Zaman would not be able to approach Delhi until he broke the power of the Sikhs, which task was almost beyond his power. The Governor-General recorded his opinion thus :—

“ The Sikhs though divided are numerous, and if unequal from disunion to oppose a large army of the Abdalis, are warlike. A sense of common danger ought naturally to produce a union amongst them, and consequently a formidable opposition to the progress of Zaman Shah, which it was highly probable, and would occupy his arms for at least a season, and obviate all apprehension that he would be able to advance beyond the Panjab.”¹

The Governor-General's only fear was that the Shah might negotiate with the Sikh chiefs for an unmolested passage through their country. To meet such emergency he issued instructions to the Resident at Lucknow to request the Nawab of Oudh to assemble an effective body of troops to join the English army, and carefully to watch the conduct of the Rohilla chief of Rampur who might help the invader, his Afghan brother. Almas Ali Khan was ordered to hold himself in readiness with the troops under his command. Lieutenant-Colonel Palmer, Resident with Sindhia, was instructed to press the Maratha chief to keep his forces ready to march ; while the Governor-General wrote to Daulat Rao Sindhia to go to Delhi to concert with the British officers the means of defence.²

By way of further precaution the Bengal armies were ordered to assemble near Kanauj. The regiment of native cavalry under Colonel Bruce was directed to march to Jaunpur. The commanding officer at Khanpur was instructed to hold a battalion of native infantry in readiness to proceed to Lucknow.³

¹ *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 25th January, 1797, pp. 133-5.

² *Ibid.*, 5th September, 1796, No. 50 ; *P.R.C.*, vi, 133.

³ *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797, pp. 127-8 ; *P.R.C.*, ii, 353 ; *Seton-Karr*, ii, 466, 467.

6. *The Position of the Marathas*

The Marathas though the strongest power in India were disunited, and were incapable of fighting against the invader. The Governor-General expressed his opinion thus: "The name of Zaman Shah has ever been an object of terror to the Marathas". Further on he stated: "Considering the habitual apprehensions entertained by the Marathas of Zaman Shah, and the situation of Sindhia's Generals and of their chiefs at Poona, I am not surprised at the alarm expressed by the Maratha generals at the report of Zaman Shah's intended invasion of Hindostan."¹

On the 10th January, 1797, Jagga Baba, a Maratha chief wrote to Palmer against the latter's suggestion of defending one's own frontiers individually. He offered to act in concert with the English, suggesting that they should take their position on the Jumna beyond Delhi, and thus bar the path on the invader.²

7. *Attitude of the Muslims*

The Muslim population of India hailed Shah Zaman with wild enthusiasm. "The Mahomedans looked upon him," says Latif in his *History of the Panjab* on p. 302, "as the champion of their faith, and the deliverer of their country. The leading Mahomedans of the Panjab, Jalal Bhatti, Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur and others joined him; but the advance of the Durrani army, and the occupation of the capital of the Panjab by the grandson of the famous Abdali king, Ahmad Shah, caused a profound sensation throughout India, however ill-prepared the Shah, and ill-designed and inopportune his plans may have been. Encouragements were held out to the Shah by a refugee prince of Delhi and Tippu Sultan.....Intrigues were set on foot in many parts of

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 17th October, 1796, Nos. 34, 35.

² *Ibid.*, *Secret Department*, 7th July, 1797, No. 9.

India to assist the king, with the object of eventually restoring the house of Tymur to power. The weakness of the Mahrattas, and the distracted state of the Nawab Wazir's country of Oudh, induced every able-bodied Mahomedan in Hindostan to arm in defence of his religion and country. The Rohillas, too, were armed cap-a-pie, and determined to assist the Shah in his endeavours to conquer India,¹ while even in the Dekkan the advent of the royal hero was hopefully and anxiously awaited by every Mahomedan".

8. *Situation of the Sikhs*

The situation of the Sikhs in the face of such a grave danger was not encouraging. The Cis-Sutlej Sikhs, headed by the Raja of Patiala, were not only indifferent to their brethren of the Manjha, but were in favour of the invader. J. Lumsden, Resident at Lucknow, in a despatch of the 27th December, 1796 to the Governor-General expressed his view thus: "Sahib Singh, the Patiala *Sardar*, seems to be disposed to unite his interests with those of the Shah, and I understand that this man, although a considerable *zamindar* in the Panjab country is not in reality a Sikh, but has been long at enmity with the principal *Sardars* of that Tribe and is in the habit of maintaining friendly correspondence with the Ministers of Zaman Shah and his father. Situated as he

¹ J. Lumsden, Resident at Lucknow, in a despatch of the 16th October, 1796, stated his opinion thus: "It is I fear very certain that if any disturbances should happen in Hindostan in consequence of the threatened invasion of Zaman Shah, little dependence could be placed on the fidelity of the Rohillas in general either to the Vizier or to the Company. On the contrary they would probably be stimulated by past connection and by ambitious views to join the Shah's standard whenever opportunity offered; but the event of the two wars in which they have been engaged with the Nabob and the Company have so depressed them that I do not believe any of the tribe the Begum (widow of Zabita Khan) excepted are possessed of the affording pecuniary assistance to any hostile power."

Imperial Records, Political Proceedings, Foreign Department, 28th October, 1796, No. 24.

is, however, in the centre of the country of the Sikhs, it is not likely that he will give the Afghans any active aid."¹

Among the Trans-Sutlej Sikhs Ranjit Singh was definitely determined to oppose the invader. It was also expected that the other Sikh chiefs would join him. As early as August, 1796 they took up their position at their head-quarters. The farthest outpost on the north-west was held by Ishri Singh at Serai Kala, Milkha Singh was at Rawalpindi, Mohar Singh at Rohtas, Sahib Singh at Gujrat, Dal Singh at Ahmadabad, Ranjit Singh² at Rasulnagar, Lahna Singh in Lahore and Gulab Singh at Amritsar³.

9. Policy of Conciliation

On this occasion Shah Zaman decided not to molest the people of the Panjab and to conciliate the Sikhs as far as possible. He was still in Kabul when certain messengers from Amritsar were arrested and produced before him; but he inflicted no punishment upon them, and set them free.⁴

He was also not going to permit his troops to plunder the people indiscriminately. With this object in view he paid the soldiers Rs. 3 per head for their expenses from Kabul to Attock.⁵ As a matter of fact he was humane and tender-hearted. A Persian news-letter, dated Kabul the 2nd August, 1796, states: "The justice and impartiality of this King are so great that nobody can wrong another. The

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 9th January, 1797, No. 1.

² *Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799*, Palmer to the Governor-General, 8th October, 1796. A report stated that Ranjit Singh paid twenty rupees a day to Diwan Lakhpat Rai for managing his household and estates; while he spent his time "in hunting and enjoying performances of dancing girls." *Imperial Records, Persian News-letter*, dated Lahore, 16th August, 1796, No. 335.

³ The news of Shah Zaman's approach spread a panic in the Panjab, and rich people sent their families to the hills of Jammu, Nurpur, Basohli, Haripur and Kangra. *Ibid.*

⁴ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 402.

⁵ *Ibid., Political Proceedings, Foreign Department*, 17th October, 1796, No. 51.

Muslim priests have no courage to molest the Hindus who have their houses near mosques and sound conches." ¹

10. At Peshawar

Shah Zaman left Kabul on the 12th October, 1796. He halted at Peshawar for about a month. Here he opened negotiations with the Sikh chiefs and wrote to them: "If you are anxious for your welfare, honour and security, you will be obedient to my commands and offer no impediment to the march of my troops, and if you do you will be trampled under foot by my cavalry." ² At this Raja Ranjit Singh advanced to the banks of the Jhelum with 10,000 horse. ³

11. On the Indus

Shah Zaman left Peshawar on the 26th November, 1796, and reached the Indus opposite Attock. From here he dispatched a contingent of 5,000 horse to the Derajat to collect men and money; while Mir Fatah Ali Khan was ordered to attend him with 10,000 troops.

When the bridge on the Indus was in preparation, four chiefs—Asad Khan, Ahmad Khan, Mir Afzal Khan and Dilasa Khan—were despatched across the river to scout for intelligence. They advanced to some distance, plundered and set fire to a few villages, and then returned to the camp.

On the completion of the bridge the advance-guard numbering 12,000 was placed under Sher Muhammad Khan, Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi and Bahadur Khan. One half of it under Sher Muhammad's son advanced towards Hasan Abdal and came into conflict with Milkha

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 336.

² *Ibid.*, 547; *Political Proceedings*, 28th October, 1796, No. 22; 2nd January, 1797, Nos. 26, 27.

³ Ranjit Singh, though only sixteen, was known at this time by the title of Raja, a distinction which he enjoyed over all other Sikh chiefs of the Trans-Sutlej country. *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 2nd January, 1797, No. 24.

Singh. The engagement lasted for a few hours, resulting in the death of about fifty men on both sides. The Durrani troops plundered two or three villages of the Sikhs, and fell back. Milkha Singh also receded to Rohtas.¹

12. *Flight of the People to Hulls*

Shah Zaman crossed the Indus on the 6th December, 1796. This news sent a thrill of horror in the mind of the people of the Panjab, particularly of Lahore and Amritsar. Most of the people all along the main road took to flight. Ranjit Singh, and Dal Singh sent their families to Patiala. Sahib Singh put up the members of his household first at Islamnagar, but later on he removed them to another place of greater safety. Lahna Singh, the chief ruler of Lahore, permitted the inhabitants to flee to any place of safety.²

The residents of Amritsar were also taking to flight; but after sometime they were forbidden by Gulab Singh, the chief of the place. On the 12th December he ordered Diwan Niranjan Das to instruct Gulab Singh *Thanedar* living in Katra Sardar Singh not to allow anybody to leave the city until the arrival of messengers from Peshawar. Mahan Singh was sent to make the same announcement in Guru Bazaar and other streets.³

Sheikh Rahim Ali, the English intelligencer, wrote from Lahore on the 18th December, 1796 that Raja Gulab Singh was sitting on the *Thara* (platform) of the *Diwan Khana*. Mahan Singh represented to him that the bankers and *shroffs* of the city were under great alarm, and desired permission to go to some place of security. The Raja answered that if the inhabitants were to quit the city not a lamp would be left burning. Subsequently the *Mahajans* of the bazaars presented themselves entreating that the Raja would

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 2nd January, 1797, Nos. 26, 27; *Persian Letters Received*, No. 546.

² *Seton-Karr*, ii, 466; *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797, No. 2, pp. 44, 47; *India Office Persian MS.*, No. 4368, folio 48b.

³ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 546.

permit them to depart while their ears and noses were safe. He, however, ordered proclamation to be made in the city desiring the people to remain without fear, that whenever his family should quit it, the inhabitants also would be escorted by a party of horse to any place they desired.¹

Shortly after on hearing of the Shah's further advance he permitted the inhabitants to leave. They instantly packed their goods and spent the whole night in loading their effects upon carts. Before daybreak they fled in consternation towards Kangra and Hoshiarpur. About five hundred persons who were greatly devoted to Gulab Singh came to take leave of him. Gulab Singh "with tears in his eyes at half *pahar* of the day mounted his horse, and with a body of two or three hundred horse and foot went for the purpose of escorting the inhabitants to the Jandiala river (Beas), which is seven *kos* from the city. From that place he detached the horse to Hoshiarpur and returned to the fort."²

13. *Skirmishes with the Sikhs*

At Attock Shah Zaman divided his army into seven divisions, each roughly consisting of about twelve thousand men. By sending them on different roads he endeavoured to surprise the rear of the Sikhs; "but being unsuccessful, had again united his forces."³

On the 19th December news arrived at Lahore that Shah Zaman was staying at Hasan Abdal. His advance-guard under several commanders of note such as Wazir Sher Muhammad Khan, Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi, Nur Muhammad Khan and Payendah Khan, marched towards the Jhelum. Ranjit Singh who had already vacated Rohtas retired to Pind Dadan Khan. A division of the Afghan army came into conflict with him, and drove him across the river. Ranjit Singh took up his position at Miani where he was joined by Milkha Singh. Sahib Singh of Gujrat was also

¹ *Ibid.*, *Political Proceedings*, 13th January, 1797, pp. 21-2.

² *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797, p. 46.

³ *Seton-Karr*, ii, 467.

there. By another ford he quietly crossed the Jhelum, made a surprise attack on the Durrani contingent at Pind Dadan Khan, and immediately recrossed the river.¹

From Serai Pakka Shah Zaman addressed a letter to Ranjit Singh asking him not to obstruct his progress. The Sikh chief replied that he was ready to fight as "through the grace of Guru every Sikh was bound to be victorious." At this the Durrani advance-guard crossed the Jhelum, and encamped at Kharian. The Sikh chiefs crossed the Chenab, and began to collect troops on the southern bank of the river.²

14. *Offer of the Mughal Emperor*

The Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II greatly rejoiced at Shah Zaman's advance into the Panjab. He sent messengers to wait upon the Shah with the offer of paying him Rs. 50,000 for every march and Rs. 25,000 for a halt.³

15. *Attempt at Pacification*

At Rohtas Shah Zaman issued orders that none of his troops should seize money and property of the people and should do wrong to them. They could take possession of grass and fuel just sufficient to meet their requirements.

A *zamindar* waited upon the Wazir who lay encamped at Gujrat, and told him that the inhabitants were in consternation. The Wazir replied that there was no cause for alarm assuring him that the Shah "came to render the country more populous and not to lay it waste." He promulgated orders to his soldiers of the vanguard not to molest anyone.

Three or four Sikhs who had been taken prisoners and

¹ *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797, pp. 43-5.

² *Ibid.*, *Persian Letters Received*, No. 32.

³ *Ibid.*, *Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797, p. 46.

Mirza Ahsan Bakht was at this time at Multan. He lived in a garden outside the city, received an allowance of Rs. 30 per day from the Governor, and led a "bad and debauched life." *Ibid.*

sent to Shah Zaman were released by him, the Shah observing that only those who appeared to be enemies should be arrested.

Lahna Singh had always been the most popular Sikh chief with his subjects, particularly with the Muslims, and whenever there was an invasion, the Musalmans always recommended him to the Durrani monarch for good treatment. On this occasion Shah Zaman sent messengers to Lahna Singh assuring him of the royal favour and retention in the governorship of Lahore, and advising him to shake off his apprehensions. Lahna Singh thanked the Shah for his kindness and regard ; but declined submission on account of hostile attitude of his comrades.¹

16. *Capture of Lahore*

Leaving Nasir Khan at Rohtas at the head of a considerable body of horse and Nasirullah Khan in Gujrat, Shah Zaman reached Eminabad on the 29th December, 1796. But as the Shah was advancing towards Lahore, some Sikhs were gathering in his rear and expelling his *thanadars* from various military posts established by him particularly in the territory lying between the Jhelum and the Chenab.

Lahna Singh had already permitted most of the residents of Lahore and Shahdara to retire to any place of safety. At this time he sent for the Muslim leaders of note and offered them to take charge of the city ; "but was persuaded by their entreaties to stay two days more."

Later on he summoned Mian Chiragh Shah Sultanpuri, a descendant of Sayyid Muhayu-ud-din Jilani, Mir Ghalib Shah, Mian Muhammad Ashiq and other Muslim leaders, and "without manifesting any partiality for the Hindoos" made over the city to their charge. He told them that he was leaving the fort in good repair without any damage done to it, and requested them to use their influence with the

¹ *Husain Shahi*, 195-6; *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797. Nos. 5, 7, pp. 56-9, 66-7; *Delhi Chronicle*, 434; *Seton-Karr*, II, 465.

Shah to secure lenient treatment to the people. Afterwards he got into a palanquin, and accompanied by 100 horse, one field piece and an elephant halted at the fort of Haji Saeed Khan.

On the 31st December, 1796, Sher Muhammad Khan Wazir at the head of 12,000 troops entered Lahore. The leading Muslim chiefs delivered the keys of the fort to him. Just then arrived a letter from Shah Zaman for Lahna Singh promising him all concessions and favours. Another messenger brought a proclamation from the Shah prohibiting the Afghan soldiers from committing any outrage on the inhabitants of the city. It was also declared that if any Afghan officer wanted to live inside the city, he could rent a house with the consent of the proprietor. Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi and the city *Kotwal* proclaimed security of life and property and in consequence the shops which had been shut were reopened.

Such were the strict orders of Shah Zaman that an intelligencer from Lahore stated that "no outrage has been committed upon any individual during the Shah's progress from Peshawar to Lahore", declaring that his troops "put to death all the Sikhs who appear in arms against them, but spare the rest."¹

Shah Zaman entered Lahore on the 1st January, 1797, and the people greeted him by showering flowers of silver upon him.²

On the 2nd January he made his appearance in the Diwan-i-Khas, where he was attended by Yusaf Ali Khan Nazir, Sher Muhammad Khan, Rahmatullah Khan, Payendah

¹ *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797, No. 7, pp. 66, 67, 68; 25th January, 1797, pp. 157, 158, 159, 160, 161; *Political Proceedings*, 20th February, 1797, Nos. 52, 81; *Persian Letters Received*, No 116; *Husain Shahi*, 195-6.

Bute Shah, 314a, however, states that the "Shah's troops plundered the people"

² "The tall sheep-skin cap of the then youthful warrior (26 years old) is still recollected as he rode upon a prancing steed on the plain fronting the palace." *Lahore District Gazetteer*, 29.

Khan, Kifayat Khan, Mulla Ghafar Khan and others. Upon inquiry the Shah was informed that about 5,000 Sikhs were assembled at Amritsar. The Shah addressed letters to the Sikh chiefs to wait upon him.¹

He then took his seat on the moveable throne (تخت هوار), visited the defences of the city, and ordered for sundry repairs, particularly in the sleeping apartment, prayer room, Saman Burj and Naulakha Bungalow. He ordered to station his own personal troops in the Shalamar Garden.

Shah Zaman ordered that nobody should oppress the people of Lahore, and that the culprit would be punished by having his belly torn out. "Some Durrani who had oppressed the inhabitants had their noses cut off and were led about as a public spectacle."²

In the afternoon, having enjoyed siesta he held a court in the Naulakha Bungalow. Sher Muhammad Wazir presented petitions from the Afghan ruler of Kasur and the Muslim *zamindar* of Kapurthala signifying their submission. The latter further represented that if the Shah would depute to him a contingent of 12,000, he would supersede the Sikh authority in that district. The Shah ordered a letter to be addressed to the Raja of Jammu.³

It was reported to the Shah that the shopkeepers of the city both Hindu and Muslim had failed in illuminating their houses and shops, and the town was converted from a place

¹ On Shah Zaman's arrival at Lahore the Raja of Patiala, "Sahib Singh caused an 'arzi to be drawn up expressive of his perfect submission and sent it to Ghulam Ahmad Khan, Newswriter with directions to proceed to the Shah's camp to represent his (Sahib Singh's) sentiments and inform His Majesty that he was ready to attend him whithersoever he might please to appoint him." *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 25th January, 1797, No. 6, p. 161.

² *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 20th February, 1797, No. 15.

Another despatch of the same date from Lahore stated that Shah Zaman "punished four or five Durrani who had committed some outrages upon the inhabitants by cutting off their noses and turning them out of the city." *Ibid.*, *Secret Department*, 25th January, 1797, p. 179, No. 6.

³ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, Nos. 71, 89.

of merriment into an abode of sorrow (ماف کد). The Shah ordered that a poll-tax should be charged from all. On representations the Muslims were exempted from its payment. The Durrani soldiers sat at the door of every Hindu house, and under blows and whips extorted money from them. The poll-tax was realized three times. "Some Hindus drowned themselves in wells,"¹ and "it caused sufferings, restlessness and confusion in the whole city of Lanore."²

17. March Against the Sikhs Postponed

In the morning of the 5th January Shah Zaman held a *darbar* in the Diwan-i-Am, where he granted public interviews to important persons. At about 9 o'clock messengers brought news that several Sikh chiefs including Baghel Singh, Tara Singh, Sahib Singh and Karam Singh were approaching

¹ Imam-ud-din Husaini who was then present in Lahore writes :

"از مردم هندو بضرب و شلاق سه بار جزیه وصول آمد و چند کس از هندو خود را در چاه انداخته هلاک ساختند و هم چندین مبلغ از مردم هندو سکنه چار مکهال امن آباد وغیره تکصیل شد و ازین مقدمه آشوب و اضطراب و خرابی تمام در شهر لاهور راه یافت"

Husain Shahi, 197.

² *Husain Shahi*, 196-7. *Sohan Lal*, ii, 33 states: "The Shah committed so many atrocities on the people of Lahore that God is a witness".

On having realized the poll-tax the Shah awarded robes of honour to eleven *chaudhris*. *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 117.

On this occasion Shah Zaman struck a coin in Lahore, which had the following inscription:—

Obverse

Reverse

یافت بیکم خدای
قرار
لت بنام شاه زمان
سکه ۱۲۱۱
هر نوجهان رواج دو

ر
هو
دار لا
السلطنة
ب
ص
ضر منه

Whitehead, iii, 106.

Amritsar to join Gulab Singh. Shah Zaman at once dispersed the courtiers, and immediately marched towards Amritsar. When he reached the Shalamar Garden, another pair of messengers announced that the Sikhs had fled away from Amritsar after performing some religious ceremonies. They also reported that "throughout this country such a terror has the Shah's army diffused that in towns and villages lately populous now not a man is to be seen," and that "all the inhabitants between Patiala and Lahore are fled to the hills, there is not a man to be seen."¹

The Shah amused himself in the Garden till noon, and then returned to the fort by the Masti Gate. In the afternoon he issued a proclamation ordering the shopkeepers to open their shops, and forbidding his men from keeping dancing girls.²

In the evening Sher Muhammad Khan Wazir wrote to the Sikh chiefs that if they desired peace they should attend upon the Shah, else they would be punished by the imperial army.³

On the 7th January Shah Zaman held court in the Diwan-i-Khas, where he was attended by his notable chiefs and Prince Shuja-ul-Mulk, the brother of the Shah. The Shah ordered for building a bridge on the Ravi to facilitate the passage of troops who were frequently passing across the river.

In the afternoon he went to the Badshahi Mosque to offer Friday prayers. On this occasion it was represented to him that Nawab Imam Bakhsh Khan who had been appointed the Governor of Lahore demanded tribute from the people. The Shah forbade him to do so.

Just then news was brought that some Sikh chiefs were assembling their troops at Haran Manarah [Sheikhupura];

¹ *Ibid.*, *Political Proceedings*, 20th February, 1797, No. 15.

² *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 135.

The following rates of some articles prevailed in Lahore on that day:—

Wheat 17 seers, barley 20 seers, ghi 2 seers, and oil 4 seers.

³ *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 23rd January, 1797, p. 68.

but the Shah did not think it proper to lead an expedition against them.¹

18. *Shah Zaman defeated at Amritsar*

On the 11th January a light cavalry detachment of the Durrani army raided Amritsar. A body of Sikhs who were there readily engaged themselves in a skirmish. In a hand to hand fight with sword and spear, the Durrani were repulsed and the Sikhs pursued them to a great distance.²

The Shah was greatly offended on hearing this, and he ordered the major portion of his army to proceed to Amritsar. The Sikhs also gathered in a large body numbering about fifty thousand. A desperate battle was the result. It commenced at 8 o'clock in the morning on the 12th January. Shah Zaman opened intense fire from the camel artillery, while the Sikhs used their matchlocks only. The fight continued unabated till 2 o'clock. About this time the Sikhs realized that they had made no impression on the enemy. They gave a signal for a general charge, "and agreeable to their mode in close combat, flung away their turbans, let loose their hair, put their beards in their mouths, and dashed into the midst of the Abdallah (Abdali) army with sword in hand." Both the armies thus continued for nearly four hours, when the Durrani army gave way. They "were pursued by the Seikhs to the very entrance of Lahore."

The losses on both sides were great, though the number given below appears much exaggerated. "It is mentioned that 35,000 men were killed in this engagement, 20,000 on the part of the Shah, and 15,000 of the Seikhs."

The Sikhs closely watched Amritsar. It was reported that about 7,000 well mounted (خوش اسب) horsemen and 10,000 Akal Bungia infantry remained armed in the fort.³

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 102.

² *Ibid.*, Nos. 103, 119; *Political Proceedings*, 20th February, 1797, No. 16.

³ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 117, *Political Proceedings*, 20th February, 1797, Nos. 16, 31; *Seton-Karr*, ii, 467.

An entry in the *Delhi Chronicle*, 438 records that on the 12th January,

19. *Retreat of a Durrani Contingent*

Shah Zaman arrived at Lahore in the night, and early next morning (13th January) he directed his attention to repairing the fort and manufacturing arms, ammunition and 500 guns. All the factories and workshops in the city were set to work at their full capacity. At the same time instructions were issued to Muzaffar Khan, the Governor of Multan, to attend him with 10,000 horse, 2,000 camels and some money. Bahawal Khan, the Chief of Bahawalpur, Mir Fatah Ali Khan, the Governor of Sind, and the Chiefs of Kasur were summoned to Lahore.

The Sikh chiefs hovered about Amritsar. Ranjit Singh at the head of 9,000 troops was stationed a few miles north of Amritsar. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was at Srigobindpur, Gulab Singh Bhangi was at a distance of twenty miles. Lahna Singh was on the other side of the Beas.

On the 15th January Shah Zaman marshalled his army within the walls of the city. The Shah realized the necessity of seeking co-operation of the people in fighting the Sikhs, and he strictly prohibited his troops from molesting them. A report of that day stated that "the Shah's army though hungry were not using much violence against the people of the country."

A contingent of the Durrani army was sent towards Amritsar to scout for intelligence. They had not gone far on the main road when they were attacked by a body of the Sikhs. In the action about 300 men were killed and wounded on either side. The Shah's troops immediately retired to Lahore.¹

20. *Attitude of Indian Powers*

In the fierce contest between Shah Zaman and the Trans-Sutlej Sikhs the attitude of all other Indian Powers was dep-

1797. Sher Muhammad Khan Wazir and two other Durrani chiefs plundered one street of Lahore and killed several persons. This might be due to the non-co-operation of the people of Lahore with the Durrani in the bloody battle of Amritsar.

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, Nos. 78, 119, 135.

lorable. There was no national feeling in the country, and political life appeared almost extinct. The Cis-Sutlej Sikhs were not prepared to co-operate with their brethren of the Trans-Sutlej. No help came from the ruling families of Kapurthala, Patiala, Nabha and Jind. On the following day after the bloody fight at Amritsar (13th January) Ranjit Singh wrote to Sahib Singh of Patiala to join them against the invader. He never sent any reply to this letter, but on receiving it remarked: "I am a *zamindar*. I cannot do without meeting the Shah."¹ The Maratha chiefs were in the Deccan, and no activity was displayed by them in the north. The Rajput Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur were preparing to throw off their allegiance to the Marathas, whilst the Raja of Jainagar was openly welcoming Shah Zaman. Thus there was absolutely no unity among the Hindu powers and princes, and the Trans-Sutlej Sikhs alone were left to fight the country's war.

The Emperor Shah Alam II and his son Akbar Shah solicited Shah Zaman to send a part of his forces under the charge of the former minister Ghazi-ud-din Khan in order to expel the Marathas from Delhi and re-establish the Mughal authority. They renewed their old offer of paying the Shah Rs. 50,000 for every march and Rs. 25,000 for every halt on the condition of the Shah's personally coming to Delhi. The Shah despatched six messengers to Delhi to study the political situation there, and two of them were directed to visit Lucknow in the disguise of beggars.

The Governor-General took precautionary measures in the interest of the English, and the dominion of Oudh. He ordered troops at Cawnpore to move to Kanauj, and directed a regiment of native infantry to march to Allahabad from Chunar, and a battalion to proceed to the latter place from Dinapore. At the same time instructions were issued to the Resident at Lucknow to request the Nawab to assemble his troops at Kanauj, to post a flying column in Rohilkhand, to enlist as many of the Rampur Rohillas as possible, to put the

fort of Allahabad under a British Officer, to procure supplies for the troops, and to store a large quantity of provisions at Allahabad. A strong force was stationed at Anupshahar to defend the frontier of Oudh.¹

21. *Skirmishes Between the Durranis and the Sikhs*

The Sikhs were carrying on their work of harassing Shah Zaman by cutting off his supplies and destroying his messengers. A news-letter from Patiala of the 17th January, 1797 stated that the Sikh horsemen infested the roads leading from Lahore to Patiala, and they seized and carried off all the *Dak harkaras* bringing news from Lahore.

On the 19th January the news arrived at Patiala that a large number of Bairagis with their property were going to the hills. A contingent of the Shah attacked them. Just then a body of the Sikhs arrived on the scene, joined the Bairagis and fought with the Afghans. In the engagement many were killed and wounded. The Durranis afterwards returned to the camp.

It was reported to the Shah that a certain detachment of Sikhs was assembling towards Chunian and Pakpattan. Nizam-ud-din Khan, the Afghan Chief of Kasur, who possessed intimate knowledge of this part of the country was given charge of an expedition against them. This chief was terribly afraid of the Sikhs, and was not prepared to offend them for fear of retribution after the Shah's withdrawal. He therefore "gave wrong information from patriotic motives, and took care to avoid coming in contact with the intended victims."²

About this time intelligence was brought to Shah Zaman that nearly three thousand Sikhs were lying encamped at Sheikhupura. The Shah at once despatched Sher Muhammad Khan at the head of a strong force equipped with a few pieces of artillery. Mulla Abdul Ghafar Khan, a resident of

¹ *Imperial Records, Letters to Secret Committee, 1797-1802, Vol. xii, pp. 5-9; Seton-Karr, ii, 466; Elphinstone, 571.*

² *Shahamat Ali's Bahawalpur, 94.*

Sheikhupura, who was then in Shah's service and in favour with the Wazir, requested Sher Muhammad Khan not to punish the Sikhs of that place promising that he would make them tributary to the Shah. The Mulla collected some money and paid it to the Wazir, and thus saved his town from ruin.¹

22. *Shah Zaman decides to Retreat*

Shah Zaman was facing two difficulties at this time. In the first place the Sikhs were carrying on depredations on all sides of the Shah's camp,² and were successfully cutting off his supplies. In certain places they were removing his outposts. In the second place his own troops were discontented as they were not allowed to plunder and punish the people of this country.

These two obstacles delayed his departure to Delhi. There is no doubt that if Shah Zaman had advanced from Lahore he would have reached the imperial capital. The Trans-Sutlej Sikhs would not have gone far in pursuit of the Shah away from their homes. Sahib Singh of Patiala and several others would have submitted and assisted him in his advance. The Marathas were not prepared to impede his progress. They might have molested his retreat, but they could not have checked his entrance into Delhi. The English were ready to oppose him if he had tried to march beyond the imperial capital towards Oudh.

Shah Zaman, however, was not destined to see this great city. He was still formulating his plans of solving the Sikh menace when there came the news of disturbances created by

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, Nos. 15, 84; *Husain Shah*, 198-9.

² Ranjit Singh took the largest part in this business. "About this period the famous Ranjeet Singh," says Shahamat Ali on p. 94, "brought himself into notice by his bold irruptions. He had at this time a party of eight or nine hundred horse under his command, and carried on depredations around the royal camp with remarkable impunity. Such was the negligence and idleness of the king's army, that no one could arrest his movement."

his brother Mahmud in Herat. Finding his throne in jeopardy he decided to retreat.¹

23. *Return Journey*

Shah Zaman's disappointment must have been great when he thought of this expedition being so barren and fruitless. It therefore seems only out of despair that "he levied a contribution from the inhabitants of Lahore", and in the course of collection naturally "great excesses were committed by his troops."² The total sum of money collected from Lahore alone amounted to twenty-two lakhs.³

The Shah crossed the Ravi by a bridge of boats on the 30th January, 1797. He halted at Shahdara till the morning of the 2nd February. He was at Wazirabad on the 3rd February. At Jhelum where he stopped for three days, he appointed Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi his governor of Rohtas and the country lying between the Jhelum and the Indus. No troops were left to the east of the Jhelum, and no chief was nominated to rule over this part of the country. Ahmad Khan was provided with 7,000 troops, 100 pieces of camel artillery, four guns and two lakhs of rupees. Several assistants were given to him to maintain his position against the Sikhs. Bahadur Khan Muhammadzai with 500 horse, Bostan Khan Durrani with 1,000 horse, Nurullah Khan Khatak with 500 horse, Bangash Kohati with 300 horse, a Yusufzai chief with 200 horse and Hasan Khan Qazilbash with 4,000 horse were left behind to co-operate with the Shahanchi Bashi.

Being just and equitable by temperament the Shah was greatly offended to find that Ramatullah Khan (the following year raised to the position of prime minister), and two other chiefs had oppressed the people and done injustice to their

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 84; *Political Proceedings*, 24th February, 1797, No. 97; *Husain Shahi*, 199.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, No. 28.

troops. They were ordered to be bound hand and foot and publicly flogged.

Shah Zaman reached Peshawar on the 25th February, and left it on the 1st of March. While passing through the Khyber Pass his rear-guard was attacked by tribesmen, who carried off some clothes and camels, and disappeared in caves and hills. His troops pursued them, killed some, and brought many prisoners. Eighteen principal men of the Pass were taken to Kabul and confined there. The Khyber road was closed for a time. Islam Khan Mohmand and Husain Khan Qazilbash were ordered to punish the Khyberis. Shah Zaman arrived at Kabul on the 17th March, 1797.¹

24. Conclusion

If the subjugation of the Panjab be assigned as the object of Shah Zaman's expedition; it may be remarked that he prosecuted this design without vigour and relinquished it with precipitation. As regards the Sikhs they made no concerted preparation to cause him alarm or to occasion his hasty retreat. On the contrary owing to dissensions prevailing among them, the Shah could expect the co-operation of some of them. A Government report states: "It was natural to suppose that a sense of common danger would have roused the Sikhs into a union for their mutual defence; but their habitual jealousies and distrusts, the sources of perpetual dissensions and hostilities among them prevented it."²

Among the Muslim chiefs Rohillas were the only people who displayed some activity to take advantage of the Shah's presence in the Panjab. Bhambu Khan, the brother of Ghulam Qadir Khan Rohilla, came to Buriya Ghat on the Jumna at

¹ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, No. 10. News communicated by Sheikh Rahim Ali on the 3rd April, 1797; 24th February 1797, No. 97; 18th December, 1797, Nos. 10, 11; *Secret Letters to Court*, 1797-1802, Vol. xii, p. 17; *India Office MS.* 4,087; *Husain Shahi*, 200-2; *Delhi Chronicle*, 438; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 59-60

² *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 7th July, 1797, No. 1.

the head of a considerable force. He pretended having received orders from Shah Zaman, and invited the Rohilla chiefs of Rampur and other places to join him. He was, however, restrained in his aggressive designs by Bapuji Sindhia, "a very active and spirited officer" of Saharanpur.¹

The sudden departure of Shah Zaman must have caused disappointment to all those who had built hopes of realizing their own selfish ends through his assistance. But the Sikhs, the Marathas and the English were happy at the unexpected termination of the invader's activities. On the retirement of Shah Zaman Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Rai Singh Bhangi communicated this news² to the Governor-General, who

¹ *Ibid.*, *Political Proceedings*, 17th February, 1797, No. 97.

A Government report stated:—

"We are sufficiently apprized of the disposition of the Rohillas to be assured that they would seize the first opportunity for rebellion, and that they would have considered the arrival of Zeman Shah at Delhi as turning it. The Pathans in the district of Farrukhabad, the less independent, are equally disposed to disaffection and plunder, and nothing but the protection of the Company's arms would have prevented, the greatest disorders in the Vizier's Dominions, if Zeman Shah had approached them." *Ibid.*

² Rai Singh wrote: "The disturbance that reigns in this quarter (meaning Shah Zaman's invasion) cannot be in any respect unknown to you. The chiefs of the Khalsa Jiu repaired to places of security on account of their families, and everyone of them is bent upon repelling this disturbance, and being now at ease with regard to their families will take measures for that purpose. Your well-wisher with his brethren and chiefs is in the fort of Buriya Parganah. They (meaning the invaders) have no knowledge of *Gurmata* which is *Salah-i-Govind* (consultation with Guru Govind Singh). *Akalpurkh's Sewaks* (servants of God) did before expel the Devoted Body (meaning the Abdalis) from this country, and overwhelmed them. They will now do the same. I hope that you will do me the honour to communicate your sentiments, and that you will believe me at all times attached to you, and that I shall fulfil all the obligations of adherence at their due season."

Imperial Records, Political Proceedings, 9th June, 1797, No. 63.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia stated: "Since the time that I heard the great and praiseworthy qualities that the English are celebrated for among all ranks of people, it was my design to have set on foot a friendly intercourse by letters with Mr. Lumsden; but the news of your arrival (at

in reply wrote :

"To Jassa Sing—I have had the pleasure to receive your letter (recapitulate that received, 7th April, 97).

"What you have written on the subject of Zaman Shah is a proof of your foresight and wisdom. I learn that the Shah has been obliged to march his army towards Candahar and that there is little probability that he will be enabled to return to Lahore; but if you should have any intelligence of a different tenor, I trust you will acquaint me with it, that whatever prudence may suggest may be performed."

"To Roy Sing—I have received your letter (*vide* that received 18th February, 1797), and was much gratified by your expressions of attachment.

"Being on my journey to Lucknow and to the present time much occupied in business and having also heard of the retreat of Zaman Shah prior to the receipt of your letter I have delayed to reply to it and it is now only necessary to congratulate you on the removal of all apprehension of an invasion by him."¹

Lucknow) has afforded me extreme satisfaction. Here follow verses of compliment. A man of wisdom has the qualities of a scimitar that nothing can resist. Lately the Afghans, framing empty schemes of ambition in their minds, repaired towards Hindostan and reached Lahore. Although those young upstarts not knowing when they were well did not endeavour to maintain their footing, yet upon the principle (expressed in these lines)—'Be not too sure that the forest is empty, perhaps a tiger may be couched in it'—immediately on this event the Khalsa Jiu prepared to oppose them; and no sooner had the Prince of Kabul, himself but a youth, arrived at Lahore than believing himself devoted to destruction if he stayed, he immediately retreated. If a system of mutual co-operation were adopted, it is certain that his expulsion would not require any great exertion of our joint endeavours. All these points will be further made known to you by the representations of Rao Ghasi Singh. I request you will communicate to me what your inclinations may suggest." (The language of some portion of this translation in the original is not very clear.)

Imperial Records, Political Proceedings, 4th September, 1797, No. 38.

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Correspondence, Letters Written*. Cf. P. R. C., i, 352.

25. *Defeat and Death of Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi,*
29th April, 1797

Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi, the Durrani Governor in the Sind Sagar Doab was stationed at Rohtas. His instructions were to seize and send to Kabul all the Sikhs who would attempt to enter his territory. On the Shah's return the Sikh chiefs were recovering their territories. Consequently, Ranjit Singh was preparing to capture Rohtas ; while Milkha Singh came to Gujrat with Sahib Singh to proceed to Rawalpindi shortly.

The Shahanchi Bashi was alarmed at this disquieting news, and he decided to take the Sikhs by surprise with a view to nip their designs in the bud.

Leaving his women and camp-followers in the fort of Rohtas under the care of Ilyas Khan, the Shahanchi Bashi at the head of 12,000 cavalry crossed the Jhelum by a bridge of boats. His advance-guard was in the command of Allah Yardad Khan, the main body was under his personal charge, whilst the rear-guard was commanded by Bahadur Khan.

Several Sikh chiefs had come to Gujrat with a view to capture their territories situated in the country lying between the Chenab and the Indus. They included Sahib Singh, Milkha Singh, Bhag Singh, Budh Singh, Ram Singh of Serai Kala, Natha Singh, Dyal Singh, Sudha Singh, Bedi Ram Singh, Jodh Singh and Dharam Singh. They knew nothing about Shahanchi Bashi's movements till he was in the neighbourhood of Gujrat.

The Sikhs instantly got ready to fight the invader, and met him at a distance of five miles from the city. In the battle that followed the Sikhs could not hold their ground. So they hurriedly retired and took shelter inside the fort. Ahmad Khan tried to besiege the town, but he was received by a strong musketry fire from the walls of the fort. In the hailstorm of balls and bullets Ahmad Khan was struck dead.

The Durrani troops finding themselves leaderless sought

safety in flight. They were hotly pursued by the Sikhs as far as the banks of the Jhelum. In the pursuit the son of Faiz Talib, the Governor of Peshawar and three other principal officers were killed ; and nearly 3,000 Afghans were slain and wounded, while a considerable number were taken prisoner. A large booty consisting of camels, horses and war material fell into the hands of the victors. Afterwards Ahmad Khan's head was cut off, and sent to Ranjit Singh at Ramnagar.

Shah Zaman being occupied in his domestic affairs displayed little concern at this discomfiture. He only sent some messengers to report full details of this incident.¹

¹ *Imperial Records, Secret Department*, 7th July, 1797, No. 1; 21st July, No. 7; 31st July, No. 5; 21st August, No. 10; *Foreign Political Consultations*, 9th June, 1797, No. 70; *Persian Letters Received*, No. 393; *Husain Shah*, 177-82, 219; *Khushwaqt Rai*, 131; *Sohan Lal*, ii, 34; *Ratan Chand*, 28a-31a; *Gyan Singh*, 931-50.

Busa Shah, 216a and *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 60 state that Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi "committed gross atrocities in the neighbourhood of Gujrat, and forcibly took to wife a Brahmin lady," and reduced a large number of boys and girls to slavery.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST MUSLIM INVASION OF INDIA, 1798-1799

1. *Shah Zaman invited to invade India*

SUCH Indian princes as were disappointed at the abrupt departure of Shah Zaman from the Panjab issued invitations to him to invade this country as soon as he was free from internal turmoils.

A news-letter of the 27th May, 1797 from Kabul stated that Shah Zaman received letters from Mir Raza Ali and Mir Habibullah, the agents of Tipu. They were staying at Kandahar, and were about to leave for Kabul. They were accompanied by three hundred men. They brought presents including many fine horses all worth five lakhs of rupees. They requested the Shah to invade India, and supply Tipu 20,000 soldiers in return for three crores of rupees in addition to the expenses of the contingent asked for.¹

Sheikh Rahim Ali, an intelligencer sent by the English to Kabul, wrote on the 29th May, 1797 that the *vakils* of the Rajas of Jammu and Kangra and of Bhambu Khan Rohilla waited on Shah Zaman with presents and informed him of the political situation in northern India.²

On the 21st June, 1797 he wrote that the Muslim chiefs of Pind Dadan Khan, Rasulnagar, Jhang, Kasur and many other places sent their *vakils* to Shah Zaman inviting him to invade the Panjab and expel the Sikhs from power.³

About the same time Wazir Ali of Oudh sent Sayyid Zain-ul-Abidin Khan and Mir Sadiq Ali to persuade Shah

¹ *Imperial Records, Persian Letters Received*, No. 393; *Secret Department*, 21st July, 1797, No. 7; 31st July, 1797, No. 5.

² *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 21st August, 1797, No. 10.

³ *Ibid.*

Zaman to march to Oudh to restore him to the throne and expel the English.¹

2. *Afghan Messengers in India*

Shah Zaman wanted to verify the authenticity of these representations and sent his agent Ghulam Muhammad Khan to India. He left Kabul on the 31st August, 1797, with fourteen letters from the Shah for various persons including the Governor-General and the Nawab of Oudh. At Multan he was taken ill with plague and was detained there for three months. He stayed at Jainagar for nearly two months. He reached Fatahgarh on the 6th May, 1798, where he delivered the letter addressed to Sir John Shore. It ran: "At this time the trusty Ghulam Muhammad Khan, the new writer in Hindustan, after having the honour of paying his respects at the resplendent presence described to us the excess of your attachment and fidelity which afforded us much satisfaction and prompted further marks of our favour towards you. It is our intention to visit Hindustan and at a proper season shall accordingly set out, when we shall encourage friends and chastise enemies. We have therefore deputed now Ghulam Muhammad Khan thither to ascertain who are our friends and who are our enemies, which he will communicate accordingly. Let your mind be perfectly at ease, and continue to walk in the path of allegiance and fidelity."²

This letter was received by Marquis of Wellesley, who expressed his "entire disapprobation of the ambitious projects of Zaman Shah."³

¹ *Imperial Records, Secret Letters from Court of Directors, 1786-1801*, pp. 222-3; *Secret and Separate Consultations*, 12th September, 1799, No. 9.

² *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 9th July, 1798, p. 847; 12th November, 1798, p. 268.

³ *Montgomery*, i, 89. Certain Government Records state that the Governor-General sent his agent to Kabul to wait on Shah Zaman "with presents of the precious commodities of China and Europe, some lakhs of gold mohurs and rupees without number."

Imperial Records, Secret Department, 21st August, 1797, No. 10.

Ghulam Muhammad brought for the Nawab of Oudh a *khilat* consisting of four pieces, a turban, a close coat, a loose coat and a *kamarband*. He delivered the Shah's letter to the Nawab at Lucknow on the 18th June, 1798, in which the Shah had stated about his intended invasion of India against the Sikhs and the Marathas and had sought the Nawab's assistance.¹

Ghulam Muhammad Khan also tried to enlist the support of the Government of Nepal, and sent an agent to the Raja expressing a desire that he should be permitted to stay in his territory in summer. Bun Shah, the chief of Kumaon Hills, on behalf of the Raja, sent a *vakil* named Tota Ram to represent to the British Resident at Lucknow that his Government had declined all the terms offered by the Afghan agent only out of regard for the Resident and the Nawab.

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 9th July, 1798; p. 847. This letter ran :—

"We have it in contemplation to go on a hunting expedition to Hindostan and to strengthen the government of the House of Timur, which is connected with us by the ties of mutual friendship and relationship. A gang of Marathas have taken possession of the country, and under the veil of friendship have been inimical to the Emperor of Hindostan, who is now in their power. How have you permitted this without regard to truth, good faith, foresight and justice? We are about to proceed to Hindostan, and it is proper that you—the English Chief and the Nawab Wazir—should gird up your loins in the service of our royal self and the Emperor of Hindostan, and whenever the royal orders shall be issued, attend the victorious stirrup and prove your loyalty. Exert yourself in all things for the good of the Emperor of Hindostan.

"The Sikhs and Marathas have endeavoured to destroy the Government of the Emperors of Hindostan. Whenever they have had footing in Hindostan they have expelled the great and illustrious persons and taken possession of the country. When our army, the star of victory, shall be extirpating the Marathas and Sikhs, if either of them particularly the Marathas demand your assistance, will you think it proper to be loyal and on the side of the Emperor of Hindostan or will you prefer hostility to him?"

Imperial Records, Political Department Consultations, 12th November, 1798, No. 30 Cf. *Persian Letters Received*, No. 188.

He suggested that the Government of Nepal was prepared to secure the person of Ghulam Muhammad Khan by inviting him into their territory if the Resident so desired, and in return for this service he demanded the restoration of Kashipur and Rudarpur. But Sir John Shore had already declined in 1796 to surrender these places, and this matter therefore was not further considered.¹

Mir Abdul Karim another Durrani agent visited Sindhia's court at Fatahgarh on the 9th September, 1798, and delivered the Shah's letter for Colonel Palmer to General Stuart. He told him that his master was coming to India "to extirpate the Maratha nation from Hindostan," and that he desired "to cultivate the friendship of the English." He said that the Shah hoped the English would "regard his arrival in no other light than that of the friend of the house of Timur and the foe of its enemies."²

Mir Sadiq Ali returned to India and reached Jainagar early in October, 1798. He brought robes of honour from Shah Zaman for the Rajas of Jainagar and Bikaner. He declared that two contingents of the Durrani army were to march *via* Bahawalpur, and sought their co-operation.³

3. Political Situation in India

Although Shah Zaman had many sympathisers in India, he could not count on active support of any one. Kashmir, Peshawar, Derajat, Multan and Sind were ruled over by his own Governors, while Bahawalpur owed him allegiance. But they were not in a position to do anything else except paying money by way of tribute, partly owing to their meagre resources and partly for fear of the Sikhs. The petty Muslim chieftains in the Panjab could not openly stir as the Sikhs were there to suppress them. Guru Bishambar Das of

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 24th December, 1798, No. 26.

² *Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799*, Pares Bradshaw to the Governor-General, dated Fatahgarh, 13th September, 1798.

³ *Ibid.*, News from Jainagar, dated 12th October, 1798.

Jandiala "by name, designation and habits a Hindu, though his mother was a prostitute",¹ was another loyal servant of the Shah; but he commended no powerful resources. The Emperor Shah Alam had no independent authority of his own. The Nawab of Oudh was dependent on the English. The Rohilla chief of Rampur was overshadowed by the Nawab of Oudh. Tipu Sultan was far in the south, and could not join the Shah without overcoming the resistance of the Marathas and the English which was beyond his power.

The Marathas were on the alert this time on account of Shah Zaman's hostile attitude towards them. In September, 1798, on the Shah's approach to the Panjab the Marathas collected troops at Shergarh near Horall (Hodal?) numbering a lakh with 200 pieces of cannon. Sindhia also marched from the Deccan with a strong army. Colonel Perron directed Major Pedron at Koil to raise a brigade. They stayed in this camp for two months, and dispersed on Shah's return.²

The Governor-General also was fully on his guard. He collected a large army at Anupshahar commanded by Sir J. H. Craig, and in case of Shah Zaman's advance from Lahore towards Delhi the Maratha forces had orders to join the English.

The Governor-General also directed John Lumsden, Resident at Lucknow, to sound the views of the Sikh chiefs for the purpose of taking steps against Shah Zaman in concert with the English; but he was not in favour of forming any formal alliance with them. He wrote: "It is not expedient at present to open any negotiations with the Seik chiefs on the ground of mutual co-operation against Zaman Shah. In the event of Daulat Rao Sindhia's early return to Hindostan such a measure may become advisable. I desire, therefore, that you will cultivate a friendly intercourse with Rai Singh and with the other principal chiefs of the Seiks, and that you will invite them to communicate to you after having consulted together on the subject either in writing, or through

¹ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department, 24th December, 1798, No. 17.*

² *Fraser, 138-9.*

some agent properly accredited, a definite project of a general confederacy and plan of operations against Zaman Shah. You will transmit to me whatever proposition you shall receive from the Seiks on this subject, and you will inform them that you have requested this communication with them for the express purpose of submitting the result to my consideration."¹

The opinion of the British authorities was that Shah Zaman would not be able to advance to Delhi. Before doing so he must conciliate the Sikh chiefs, which was a difficult task, and might take considerable time detaining him in the Panjab till the end of cold weather, when he would return to his country.²

In spite of these conjectures steps were taken to meet the emergency. It was settled that the army to be assembled near Anupshahar should be joined by the Nawab of Oudh in person, accompanied by four or five of his own best battalions, fifty pieces of cannon, and as many serviceable horse as could be assembled numbering about thirteen hundred. They were to be further reinforced by two infantry battalions, six hundred horse, four pieces of cannon carrying balls of from ten to twelve pound weight, two mortars, eight hundred field pieces, and one hundred camel artillery from the troops under Almas Ali Khan.

It was determined that the mud fort of Mandi Ghat should be garrisoned by two more battalions of Almas Ali, and that a bridge of boats should be thrown across the Ganges at that place commanded by the guns mounted on the ramparts.

Almas Ali Khan was instructed to throw as strong a garrison as could be spared into the fort of Kasganj, to direct the corps under his authority at Etawah and Sheikhabad, to march with all expedition to reinforce the garrison of Mandi Ghat, should the invader approach in either of those

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 8th February, 1799, No. 21.

² *Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794—1799, J. Collins to the Governor-General, dated at Fatahgarh, 6th December, 1798.

directions where they would be exposed to be cut off.

It was a part of the general plan of operation that a detachment of the Company's troops be left in such position as to enable them to act at a short notice either to repress any appearance of revolt amongst the Rohillas or to check insurrection in whatever quarter of Oudh it should appear. It was therefore agreed that the corps commanded by Colonel Russell, should also be reinforced by three of the Nawab's own battalions with their guns.

The British Government also decided to collect four lakh maunds of grain at Allahabad. The actual amount collected was as follows :—

| | | |
|---|-----|---------------|
| By Almas Ali Khan | ... | 50,000 maunds |
| By Madari Lal, <i>Amil</i> of Allahabad | ... | 100,000 „ |
| By Tahsin Ali Khan ¹ | ... | 75,000 „ |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 2,25,000 „ |

On the 21st November, 1798, Wellesley wrote to the Court of Directors: "I have the satisfaction to inform you that every possible precaution has been taken for the effectual defence of the frontier of Oude."²

4. *Position of the Sikhs*

The Sikhs knew that Shah Zaman was determined to repeat his exploits, and they expected his invasion in the winter of 1797. Some Sikh chiefs therefore decided to meet at Amritsar on the Diwali day and to concert measures to oppose the invader. They invited Sahib Singh of Patiala to be present at Amritsar; but he being a loyal subject of the Afghan monarch "declined the invitation to be present at the conference on the pretence that their plans this year would prove equally unefficacious like those of last season."³

¹ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, No. 20.

² *Montgomery*, i, 358.

³ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 16th October, 1797, No. 10. Sahib Singh was in correspondence with Shah Zaman. He sent his

About this time Milkha Singh was at Rawalpindi; but the farthest outpost on the north-west frontier at Serai Kala was held by his wife. It might surprise many, but not those who understand the spirit of Sikhism. After all it was Sikh religion alone that produced about half a dozen women of great calibre and capacity who played an important part in the short political history of the Sikhs covering not more than a century. Ranjit Singh was at Pind Dadan Khan, Sahib Singh at Gujrat, Jodh Singh at Wazirabad, Dal Singh at Ramnagar, Jassa Singh son of Karam Singh at Chiniot, Chait Singh¹ and Mohar Singh at Lahore, Gulab Singh at Amritsar, Jodh Singh son of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia at Taran Taran, Jaimāl Singh at Shakargarh, Bhag Singh, Nahar Singh, Fatah Singh and Jiwan Singh at Sialkot, Tara Singh Ghaiba at Nakodar, and Baghel Singh's wife and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia at Nadaun.²

The military strength of some of them was as follows:—

- | | | |
|---|-----|----------------------|
| 1. Milkha Singh of Rawalpindi | ... | 2,000 horse |
| 2. Sahib Singh of Gujrat | ... | 6,000 „ |
| 3. Ranjit Singh | ... | 15,000 „ |
| 4. Chait Singh and Mohar Singh of Lahore | ... | 16,000 „ |
| 5. Gulab Singh of Amritsar | ... | 6,000 „ |
| 6. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia | ... | 3,000 ³ „ |

The Sikh chiefs though powerful were at variance with one another, and were engaged in constant internal hostilities. There was therefore no prospect of successful opposition

messengers to the invader whom they met at Peshawar, offering his submission and homage. They brought letters from the Shah and his Wazir for the Raja Sahib Singh received these letters in full court, and after applying them to his forehead delivered them to his *munshi* to be read out. *Ibid.*, *Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, No. 3.

¹ Lahna Singh, the most popular Sikh chief having died in September, 1797, was succeeded by his son Chait Singh. *Imperial Records, Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 18th December, 1797, No. 13.

² *Ibid.*, 24th December, 1798, No. 7; *Persian Letters Received*, No. 393.

³ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 14th December, 1798, No. 11.

on their part. It was, however, expected that the Sikhs would not allow the Shah an easy passage, and that they would organise guerilla warfare, harass his troops and impede his progress.¹

Major General Sir J. H. Craig who held the chief command of the Company's forces at Anupshahar had a poor opinion about the Sikhs. He thought that the Sikhs were not able "to make any opposition at all to the Shah's approach." He believed that their power rested on rumour and that the delusion would appear "in the day of trial." He was of opinion that the Sikhs were neither "so numerous, not so hardy" as they were represented. He further stated: "The mass of these are a mixture of Mussulmen and Hindoos; the former of which from every motive, and the latter in detestation of the oppressions of their present Lords, will rejoice in the Shah's approach."²

5. *Shah Zaman's Preparations*

As a result of his messengers' reports Shah Zaman decided to invade India once more. A report stated: "The King has taken his resolution. Three days he clothed himself in red, and he told Wafadar Khan, his principal minister, that he must necessarily visit Hindustan whatever might be the consequences."³ He had several laudable objects in view. He wished to settle the affairs of the Panjab, and then detach a part of his army to Delhi. The country between the Jumna and the Chambal was to be given to Shah Alam II, while the eastern boundary of the Afghan dominions was to be extended to the banks of the Jumna as far as Karnal. He also designed to leave one of his officers to manage the Government of Delhi.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, Montgomery, i, 364.

² *Montgomery*, i, 300. This view was absolutely wrong.

³ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1799, No. 3.

⁴ *Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799*, News from Jainagar, dated 12th October, 1798.

At the Shah's invitation troops began to pour into Kabul. The great concourse of soldiers in the capital raised prices of various articles of food considerably.¹ Shah Zaman soon collected an army of 60,000 horse provided with 2,000 camel artillery and *jizairs* and thirty-five pieces of cannon; while the number of camp-followers and baggage camels could not be determined.²

Shah Zaman was bestowing his favours at this time on Rahmatullah Khan whom he granted the title of Wafadar Khan. He was a crafty and cunning person, "an intriguer with soft voice and silky manners, cringing to his superiors, overbearing and insolent to all others." He was a Sadozai, an Afghan clan to which the Durrani kings belonged. He was also connected with the royal family, being a brother to a wife of Shuja-ul-Mulk, the real brother of Shah Zaman.³ He became a rival of Sher Muhammad Khan Bamizai, son of Shah Vali Khan in whose family the office of the *Wazir* was declared to be hereditary by Ahmad Shah. Besides, he was the leader of the Durrani. The Shah appointed his favourite Minister for Indian Affairs, and by this step he alienated the sympathy of the Durrani tribe. Still greater mistake was committed by him in keeping both the rival chiefs with him during his campaign. Furthermore he worsened the situation by consulting both on Indian affairs, by accepting the advice of Wafadar Khan, and by publicly criticising the opinion expressed by Sher Muhammad Khan.⁴

¹ Wheat was sold thirteen seers and inferior grain twenty seers to the rupee.

² A report put the camels at 50,000, which was evidently a much exaggerated number.

Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799, J. Collins to the Governor-General, dated 18th December, 1798.

³ *Malleon*, 308; *Hough*, 223, f. n.

⁴ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, extract of a letter from Kabul, dated 27th August, 1798; 29th October, 1798, Nos. 2, 5; 14th December, 1798, No. 11.

5. *The Shah enters India*

Shah Zaman left Kabul early in September, and reached Peshawar by the end of the month. He received the revenues of the province in merchandise and spices and distributed these commodities among his troops.

Then he discussed the question of the route. Some officers were in favour of marching *via* Multan, Bahawalpur and Bikaner, in order to avoid conflict with the Sikhs. It was suggested that Pratab Singh the Raja of Jaipur and Bhim Singh the Raja of Jodhpur at the head of 14,000 and 12,000 troops respectively might co-operate with the Shah. Shah Zaman did not agree to follow a long, circuitous and tedious route.¹

7. *Encounter with the Sikhs*

Shah Zaman left Peshawar on the 13th October. He lay encamped at Chamakni on the 14th October. Three bridges of boats were laid across the Indus at Attock. His advance-guard crossed the river on the 19th October. Islam Khan, a messenger sent by the English to Shah Zaman's camp, was following the Afghan army from Peshawar. He reported that a section of the advance-guard was placed in the command of the son of Ahmad Khan Shahanchi Bashi, and Madad Khan. The Sikh outpost at Serai Kala had been evacuated, and these chiefs managed to reach Rawalpindi, where two assistants of Milkha Singh were busy in winding up their business. Milkha Singh having already fought two engagements with the Mullukia *zamindars* at Serai Kala and Rawalpindi had fallen back by thirty miles. Having been taken unawares the Sikhs lost the day in the skirmish, and both the Sikh chiefs were captured. They were sent to Shah Zaman whom they offered a ransom of three lakhs of rupees. The Shah accepted the money and "ordered both of them to

¹ *Ibid.*, 14th December, 1798, No. 11.

be drowned in Attock."¹

Shah Zaman reached Rawalpindi on the 3rd November, while his advance-guard consisting of 15,000 chosen horse under the sons of Payendah Khan, Husain Beg Khan and other *Sardars* was thirty miles ahead of him. The Shah arrived at Rohtas on the 16th November, when he was joined by Raja Ghaylaw, the Muslim chief of Chakwal with a body of 4,000 horse. Milkha Singh, Ranjit Singh and Karam Singh lay encamped at Rasulpur, and Sahib Singh was at Gujrat.²

8. *Dissensions in the Durrani Camp*

As already pointed out Shah Zaman had given the chief control of his Indian campaign to Wafadar Khan by depriving his Wazir Sher Muhammad Khan of this office. The rivalry and jealousy between the two leaders was undermining the influence of Shah Zaman. On the 16th November at Rohtas Wafadar Khan's men intercepted some letters supposed to have been written by Sher Muhammad Khan to Sikh chiefs warning them against the Shah's attack and exhorting them to hang about the Afghan army without fear. Wafadar Khan suggested that all authority should be taken away from the Wazir. Shah Zaman promised to investigate the matter.³

9. *Skirmishes with the Sikhs*

The Sikhs on this occasion were in a state of complete disunity and were quietly retiring before the Shah without offering any opposition.

The Shah arrived at Gujrat on the 18th November. From

¹ "All this," wrote Islam Khan, "I have seen with my own eyes." *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 12th November, 1798, pp. 508-9; *Secret and Separate Consultations*, 12th September, 1799, No. 5; *Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, No. 7.

² *Ibid.*, *Political Proceedings*, 14th December, 1798, No. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, *Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, No. 17.

here a detachment was directed towards Dinanagar, a territory where the Sikh population predominated. The son of Shahanchi Bashi led the vanguard, encamped at Wazirabad and massacred the inhabitants of three villages in the neighbourhood. The Shah wrote to Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra and the Raja of Jammu desiring them not to allow the Sikh families to take refuge in the hills. The Shah's messengers also arrived at Jandiala to meet Bishambar Das.¹

The *zamindars* of Shahdara invited Nizam-ud-din of Kasur to take possession of the forts evacuated by the Sikhs. He arrived there at the head of 400 horse. On the 18th November he was attacked by Ranjit Singh and Sahib Singh with 500 horse. Nizam-ud-din received a shot in the leg and fell from his horse. He was instantly removed from the battle-field, and recovered two hours after his fall. Fifty Afghans lost their lives in the action; while only twenty Sikhs were killed. The son of Shahanchi Bashi came to the rescue of the Kasur chief. He massacred the inhabitants of the village, but did not pursue the Sikhs. He then retired to Eminabad, and there waited for the arrival of the Shah.²

On the 19th November, Wazir Wafadar Khan was somewhere between Gujrat and Wazirabad. Ranjit Singh, Sahib Singh, Nahar Singh and Sondhe Singh attacked him. Wafadar Khan lost a considerable number of his troops and retreated towards Gujrat for about five *kos*. The Sikhs fell back towards Wazirabad. Ranjit Singh sent for Bhag Singh, Gulab Singh Bhangi and Jaimal Singh who had sent off their families and effects to the hills and were staying at Amritsar with 4,000 horse. Bibi Sada Kaur, mother-in-law of Ranjit Singh, who lay encamped at Amritsar continually reproached them for not replying to Ranjit Singh: "If you are disposed to assist Ranjit Singh, advance and join him; if not, throw off that dress and take mine; give me your clothes and I will march against the enemy."³

¹ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, No. 17.

² *Ibid.*, No. 21; 14th December, 1798, No. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, Nos. 17, 26.

Some Sikh chiefs cleverly managed to get into the rear of the Shah, and at a place about 25 miles from the rear of Shah Zaman's army plundered a caravan consisting of merchants with considerable property. This attack exercised great influence on the Shah. He hesitated to march to Delhi leaving the Sikhs behind unsubdued. In his opinion the Sikhs were unequal to a conflict in the open field; but their guerilla attacks could greatly harass and distress his army.¹

That day's letter stated that Shah Zaman had established his authority and **regulated** the country as far as Jhelum. From Jhelum to Amritsar the country lay deserted. The Shah wrote to Nizam-ud-din of Kasur to prevent the people of Lahore from running away assuring them of the Shah's protection and promising him the governorship of Lahore in return. Nizam-ud-din explained his inability to get the people back to the city.

The newswriter laments again and again for the dissensions prevailing among the Sikhs: "Here are many Sikh chiefs who if they were united could collect a body of fifty or sixty thousand fighting men; but discord, jealousy and want of spirit deprive them of all power of opposition."²

10. *The Sikhs gather at Amritsar*

The news³ of the 20th and 21st November stated that

¹ *Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794-1799, J. Collins to G. G., dated Camp near Rodayer, 18th December, 1798.

² *Imperial Records, Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, Consultation No. 17.

³ J. Collins, Resident with Sindhia stationed at Fatahgarh, employed a large number of messengers to obtain news about Shah Zaman's progress. These persons had a difficult task to perform. The Sikhs would not allow them a passage through their country and if detected they were at once put to death. The Afghan army also strictly guarded its own secrets. The Resident wrote to the Governor-General on the 15th December, 1798: "The difficulty of obtaining correct intelligence from the camp of Zaman Shah increases daily. Of fourteen *cossids* sent by me towards the Attock not one has yet returned But unfortunately

Ranjit Singh and Milkha Singh came to Amritsar from Shahdara, and interviewed Budh Singh, Gulab Singh, Bhag Singh, Jaimal Singh and Bibi Sada Kaur. Bhag Singh sent fifty camels laden with his goods and property to a place of safety across the Sutlej, and himself remained at Amritsar with five pieces of cannon and 2,000 horse. These Sikh chiefs invited Tara Singh, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Gurdatt Singh, Bhanga Singh, Mahtab Singh and Rai Singh to join them in fighting against the Shah saying: "Victory is the gift of God. Let us make an effort to oppose him."

At this invitation Tara Singh sent away his property from Nakodar to the hills and was expected to arrive at Amritsar soon with 500 well mounted troops. The report stated that the Jullundur Doab lay almost deserted, and all the people had fled to the hills and jungles. In cities such as Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Bajwara and Serai Dakhni no human being was to be seen.¹

11. *Discord increases in the Shah's Camp*

The news of the 22nd November stated that dissensions arose in the Shah's camp to a considerable degree. It was reported that Sher Muhammad Khan was speaking to Shah Zaman on some important subject, and that the Shah being convinced of the Wazir's sound arguments felt pleased. This greatly incensed Wafadar Khan, who opposed the opinion of the Wazir. In the course of discussion hot words passed between the two, and Wafadar Khan indiscreetly struck the Wazir in the face. Sher Muhammad Khan considering the opportunity to return the insult unfavourable took it patiently. But his feelings were so much hurt that he made up his mind to bring disgrace to Wafadar Khan by causing failure of the

certain accounts have been received of the plunder and murder of two of these poor men by the Sicks who are as active as the troops of the Shah in intercepting all letters from this quarter." *Imperial Records, Political Department*, 10th December, 1799.

¹ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1798, No. 21.

Shah's campaign. In consequence he secretly encouraged Ranjit Singh and other Sikh chiefs to continue to harass the royal camp with their guerilla tactics assuring them that the Shah was not disposed to continue long in the country.

Emboldened by this intelligence the Sikhs commenced "infesting the camp in every quarter, and scarcely a day passed when they did not carry away horses or other property. Supplies were also cut off on their way to the camp, and thus great embarrassment was caused among the royal troops."¹

12. *Submission of the Raja of Jammu*

On the 23rd November Shah Zaman sent a detachment with a letter to the Raja of Jammu demanding an explanation for his having joined the Sikhs against the Shahanchi Bashi, to pay the usual tribute and to attend upon him in person. The Raja received the troops with professions of loyalty and obedience. He wrote in reply that he and his ancestors had always been the slaves of the royal threshold; he never had the audacity to assist the Sikhs in plundering His Majesty's troops and was ready to pay the tribute. He despatched Mian Musa, the superintendent of his household, to Shah Zaman.²

13. *Collisions with the Sikhs*

As the Shah was moving by slow marches towards Lahore, collisions with the Sikhs were growing more common. On the 23rd November a contingent of the Durrani army attacked a body of 600 Sikh horse who were returning from the hills after escorting their families. The Sikhs were not prepared to fight and they managed to escape after a brief resistance.

On the 24th November Shah Zaman was informed that the Sikhs at Amritsar had taken alarm. He quietly sent a contingent of 10,000 troops to advance to Amritsar. Ranjit

¹ *Ibid.*, No. 22; *Shahamat Ali*, 95

² *Imperial Records, Foreign Department*, 24th December, 1799, No. 24.

Singh and Sahib Singh at the head of 500 horse were patrolling about eight miles from Amritsar. They sighted the Afghans and instantly engaged them in a fight. On hearing of this engagement Gulab Singh, Jodh Singh and Budh Singh with 2,000 chosen horse joined in the combat. The battle raged for three hours, and about 500 men on each side were killed. The Afghans were ultimately forced to retreat to Lahore.¹

14. *The Sikhs encouraged Secretly*

The situation in the Durrani camp was daily deteriorating owing to the jealousies between Wafadar Khan and Sher Muhammad Khan. On the 24th November another quarrel took place between them, and some of their partisans came to blows. "It seems that Sher Muhammad Khan writes privately to the Sikh chiefs exhorting them to take courage, to remain with their forces at Amritsar and harass the Shah's army, which he says consists of only 30,000 fighting men, the rest of the people being vagabonds and camp-followers. He writes too that the Shah is afraid of them."²

15. *Shah Zaman tries to procure Assistance*

Shah Zaman needed some more troops and money. On the 25th November he received a reply from his Governor of Multan saying that the summer crops had been destroyed by flooded rivers. He had already supplied the Shah Rs. 82,000, and was endeavouring to procure more money. The Shah wrote in reply that he must provide him with 5,000 troops and their expenses.

On the 26th November the Shah and Wafadar Khan sent letters to the hill rajās enjoining them to plunder the Sikhs and not to allow other refugees to take shelter in their territories, also to pay tribute and send their *vakils* to the camp.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Nos. 22, 24.

On that day the Shah issued orders not to send the foraging parties towards Amritsar, but in the direction of Eminabad. The Shah accepted whatever tribute was paid to him by any zamindar.¹

16. *Conflicting Counsels given to the Shah*

On the 27th November the Shah lay encamped at Shahdara. On inquiries he was informed that the Sikhs were reorganising their forces at Amritsar. Ranjit Singh, Sahib Singh, Gulab Singh and Budh Singh were stationed there with 10,000 troops. Sahib Singh Bedi was also there ; but he was preparing to leave for the hills. Tara Singh Ghaiba told him that if he would retire to the hills, others might follow suit as the Bedi was considered the chief leader of the Sikhs. The Bedi agreed to stay, and encamped at Nanakpur with 4,000 chosen horse.²

On the 28th November Shah Zaman sought advice from his two leading nobles. Sher Muhammad Khan was summoned first. He stated that it was not desirable for the Shah to advance to Delhi. To support this view he represented that fresh disturbances were expected at Herat. The army was distressed for want of money. The people of the country through fear of plunder and massacre had fled. The Sikhs had sent their property to places of safety and were ready to oppose him. It required great treasure to enable him to extirpate the Sikhs. If he advanced to Delhi, the Sikhs would be in his rear. Further the Marathas and the English were united, and the Shah was not in a position to subdue them. If he were surrounded he would find it difficult to retreat. The Shah declared that he would verify his statements.

Next ~~Wafadar Khan~~ was called in. He begged His Majesty not to be under any apprehensions. "God would order all well. How could the Sikhs oppose the Royal army? The Marathas too could not make head against it. War against

¹ *Ibid*, No. 24.

² *Ibid*

the English would certainly be a serious affair but when His Majesty appeared at Delhi, the Musalman troops would assemble from all quarters to join him. The Rajas of Hindostan were all disaffected to the Maratha Government and would come over to the Shah. The most advisable measure would be to amuse the English and oppose the Marathas."

Shah Zaman then sent for Sher Muhammad Khan and told him what Wafadar Khan had advised. He submitted that although His Majesty had marched 250 miles from Attock to Lahore, the collection amounted to no more than one lakh of rupees. Two years previously twenty-two lakhs of rupees were levied in Lahore. He suggested to the Shah to give up his plans of advancing to Delhi and to endeavour to establish his rule in the Panjab by conciliating the Sikhs and kindly treating the people.

The Shah agreed with Sher Muhammad Khan, and proclaimed in his army that "any person committing outrages against the people should have his belly ripped up."¹

17. *The Sikhs get ready for an Offensive*

The news of the 29th November stated that Bhag Singh, Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh, Chait Singh and Sahib Singh with 10,000 horse marched from Amritsar towards Lahore to harass the Shah's troops. They put all their forts at Amritsar in a condition of defence and left 300 tried men in each. Dal Singh with 1,000 horse and Fatah Singh and Jaimal Singh with 2,000 horse were in their forts at Amritsar. Bibi Sada Kaur with 1,000 troops was also there. Tara Singh and Sahib Singh Bedi were near the hills, where were stationed 7,000 horse with 21 pieces of cannon. Nearly two lakhs of fugitives had also gone in that direction. Many people had taken shelter at Patiala and Malerkotla. The Raja of Jammu pretended to be obedient ; but he was not prepared to betray or oppress the fugitives in his country².

¹ *Ibid.*, No. 28

² *Ibid.*

18. *The Durrani Detachment sustains Losses*

On the 30th November, 1798 Shah Zaman went from the bank of the Ravi over the bridge on an elephant to the fort of Lahore. All the nobles presented *nazars* according to their ranks. Nizam-ud-din, the chief of Kasur, who had lately been wounded in an action with Ranjit Singh, and who had recovered by this time, presented a *nazar* of five gold *mohurs*, and was honoured with a *khilat* of three pieces. At this time it was reported to the Shah that 2,000 camels laden with fresh and dried fruits escorted by 1,500 troops on their way from Kabul to Lahore were plundered by Dal Singh, uncle of Ranjit Singh, in the village of Talwandi Musa Khan, 7 miles north-east of Gujrañwala. The Shah ordered a detachment of 10,000 horse to pursue him; but the troops being unable to come at him returned. Dal Singh, who, in addition to fruits had secured 50 horses, 70 camels, 16 mules and many shawls, joined the camp of the Sikhs whom he advised to retire to Amritsar for the sake of safety as they could take shelter in several forts and in the neighbouring jungles.¹

On that day a skirmish took place between a party of the Afghans and the Sikhs nine *kos* from Lahore towards Amritsar in which five or six men were killed and wounded. The Sikhs being smaller in number were obliged to retreat. Friendly letters from the Shah and Wafadar Khan were sent to Bishambar Das,² the Guru of Jandiala. The *vakil* of the Raja

¹ *Imperial Records, Political proceedings*, 11th January, 1799, No. 21.

Shah Zaman's arrival at Lahore filled Shah Alam and his son Akbar Shah with great joy. They decided to go as far as Panipat or even beyond to receive the invader.

Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799, J. Collins to Governor-General, dated Fatahgarh, 6th December, 1798.

The Sikhs started laying waste the country nearly 50 *kos* all round Lahore.

Sindhia's Affairs, 1794-1799, J. Collins to G. G., dated camp near Rodayer, 18th December, 1798.

² Bishambar Das commanded a contingent of 2,000 horse. *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 14th December, 1798, No. 11.

of Jammu with a letter and a *nazar* of 101 rupees from his master waited upon Shah Zaman.¹

19. *The Sikhs cut off Supplies*

The Sikhs realized that in view of their disunity the best way of striking at the Durrani army was to cut off supplies coming to their camp. Consequently, on the 2nd December Ranjit Singh and six other chiefs with 11,000 chosen horse encamped ten miles from Amritsar on the Lahore road. One thousand of them advanced to forage. They came into collision with an Afghan contingent, but were beaten off. The Sikhs sent various parties towards Kasur also and cut off supplies of grain from reaching the Shah's camp from two directions, Kasur and Amritsar. Grain was selling in the Durrani camp at thirteen seers per rupee.²

Some troops of Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur who had gone on a foraging expedition were attacked at Kot Lakhpat, nine miles from Lahore, by Ranjit Singh at the head of 400 horse. A fierce fight took place, and "although almost all of them were wounded on the occasion, they did not allow the Sikhs to possess themselves of the forage. The skirmish continued till after sunset, when Runjeet Singh was compelled by the darkness to retreat."³

Another "small party of the Sikhs" attacked the royal

¹ *Ibid.*

On this occasion Shah Zaman struck his second coin of Lahore, which bore the following inscription:—

| <i>Obverse</i> | <i>Reverse</i> |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| ۱۲۱۳ بھیکم الہ | دار |
| | هورا |
| | لا |
| زمان شاہ بہمن وایسارے | لسلطتہ |
| | ب |
| سکہ زد بر سیم و زر | ضر سنہ ۶ |

Whitehead, iii, 120.

² *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings, 11th January, 1799, No. 21.*

³ *Shahamat Ali, 95.*

camp at Lahore, plundered the merchants "with impunity" and made good their escape.¹

20. *Some Sikhs submit to the Durrani*

Some Sikhs wished to submit to Shah Zaman. They would not do so in broad daylight, and desired to wait upon the Shah at night.

In the evening of the 4th December Shah Zaman went out to visit the city. He rode on an elephant. The bankers and traders illuminated the streets and showered upon him artificial flowers of gold and silver. Then there was a display of fireworks. The Shah was pleased at this demonstration of joy and gave away shawls to bazaar *chaudhris*. He returned to the fort at 8 o'clock.²

The Sikhs availed themselves of this opportunity and made obeisance to the Shah at the gate of the fort. They were admitted to his presence. Jodh Singh, brother-in-law of Dal Singh presented the Shah with a horse and five rupees, and received a *khilat*. Nidhan Singh of Sheikhpura and Wazir Singh Nakai offered five horses and five rupees each. They were honoured with *khilats*. These Sikh chiefs were treated with distinction, were assured of the management of their own districts, and were instructed to invite other Sikh *sardars* to follow their examples.³

21. *Some Expeditions despatched against the Sikhs*

The *zamindars* of Khureah (Ghurka=12 miles south-

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 11th January, 1799, No. 30.

² That day wheat flour was selling in the Shah's camp at the rate of 25 seers and ghi $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers for a rupee

³ J. Collins wrote to the Governor-General from Camp near Bilgram on the 23rd December, 1798: "Recent intelligence from Amritsar states that Zaman Shah is at present endeavouring to conciliate the *zamindars* who possess lands adjacent to Lahore, and that he treats with much kindness and liberality all Sikhs of any sort of note who can be prevailed on to attend at his *Durbar* for the purpose of acknowledging his authority."

Imperial Records, Political Proceedings, 11th January, 1799, No. 28.

east of Patti) and Purwaheh¹ (Pannuan=12 miles north-east of Patti) at the instigation of some Sikhs plundered a village belonging to Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur. The *zamindars* of that village lodged a complaint with Shah Zaman who sent a detachment against both the villages which were destroyed and their inhabitants put to the sword.

At the request of Nizam ud-din Khan of Kasur a detachment of 5,000 horse was sent towards Kasur on the 7th December to check the Sikh raids which were growing very common in his territory. The Afghans fell on the village Rogheen(?), massacred all the inhabitants, and carried off large booty.

In the night the news reached that Kasur was besieged by the Sikhs and in consequence Nizam-ud-din was at once ordered to go to Kasur. Some Durrani troops were also despatched to march towards the road of Multan to frighten the Sikhs to raise the siege. This had the desired effect as the Sikhs retired before their arrival after plundering some portions of the city. Nizam-ud-din thereupon returned to Lahore.

On the 9th December Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur reported to the Shah that 4,000 Sikhs had again collected near the banks of Beas in the *parganah* of Patti; and were laying waste his territory. Shah Zaman ordered two detachments of 12,000 each with five days' provisions to march against them. On their approach the Sikhs dispersed in all directions.²

The following day Ranjit Singh, Bhag Singh, Gulab Singh, Budh Singh, Fatah Singh and Bibi Sada Kaur gathered at Amritsar. They received a letter from Bhag Singh of

¹ In the original records it is stated that both are situated 30 *kos* from Lahore and 5 from Patti.

² A list of current prices of articles in the royal bazaar indicated the following rates per rupee :—

| | | |
|-------------|-----|-------------------|
| Wheat | ... | 20 seers |
| Rice | ... | 12 " |
| Mash | ... | 15 " |
| Mung | ... | 15 " |
| Raw sugar | ... | 14 " |
| Ghi | ... | 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " |
| Mustard oil | ... | 12 " |

Hallowal on the western bank of the Ravi stating that a *Begam* of the Shah's harem and a number of merchants escorted by a small force were coming from Peshawar to Lahore, and he asked them to plunder the party. Dal Singh at once got ready for the job and easily succeeded in his object.

Several *zamindars* of note were staying in Lahore. When they wanted to take leave of the Afghan monarch he detained them a little longer with a view to secure their assistance in dealing with the Sikhs. Among them were Jafar Khan Kukka of Khanpur, Malik Amanat of Pindi, Nur Khan of Katas, Raja of Dhani, Raja Kifayat Muhammad Husain of Rasulnagar, Raja of Kussuck [Jhang?], Raja of Pothohar, Raja Fatah of Khatak, Raja of Jalalpur, Karam Khan of Dunkra?), Raja of Chathas, Nidhan Singh of Sheikhpura, Wazir Singh Nakai and Nathu Singh *vakil* of the Raja of Jammu. Guru Bishambar Das's *vakil* named Murun also joined with presents consisting of a horse, a pair of shawls, five maunds of black pepper, 100 fine turbans and Rs. 500 cash.¹

22. Attempt at good Administration

Shah Zaman appeared to be intent on good administration. On the 4th December Wafadar Khan presented a man before the Shah, who calumniated the inhabitants of the city and endeavoured to persuade him to lay the city under contribution. The Shah was greatly displeased and ordered his belly to be ripped up.

On the 10th December some grain merchants complained to the Shah that five or six soldiers in the previous night had broken open and plundered two shops. Orders were at once issued to find out the offenders, to lead them through the camp with arrows struck through their noses and rip up their bellies. "This sentence was carried into execution."²

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 11th January, 1799, Nos. 28, 33, 34.

² *Ibid.*

23. *Shah Zaman tries to conciliate the Sikhs*

Shah Zaman failed to solve the Sikh problem. He attempted to deal hard blows at them, but they produced no effect. He then "ordered Wafadar Khan to endeavour to sow dissensions among the Sikh chiefs," and his Minister assured him that "it was the very thing he was meditating"; but all this was in vain.

Some shrewd Sikh chiefs understood this game, and it produced the opposite effect. They tried to strengthen their resources by procuring large supplies of war material particularly of gunpowder. Being short of funds they borrowed Rs. 10,000 from Khushhal Singh, the *Granthi* of Hari Mandir. They also called to Amritsar Tara Singh, Sahib Singh Bedi, Sakhu Singh the adopted son of Baghel Singh, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and other chiefs of the Jullundur Doab.

On the 13th December the Shah again held a long discussion regarding the menace of the Sikhs who were dashing to pieces all the dreams of his life, and he advised Wafadar Khan to spare no pains in conciliating the Sikhs, remarking that "although the Durrani were apparently brave, they were at bottom timid."¹

Consequently, Wafadar Khan who was losing confidence of the Shah as well as of the army made another attempt to conciliate the Sikh chiefs assembled at Amritsar. He deputed his Diwan, Atma Ram, with costly *khilats* and rich presents to induce them to acknowledge the authority of Shah Zaman. The Sikh *sardars* displayed total aversion to place "any confidence in the promises made to them on the part of the Shah."²

¹ *Ibid* , No. 40.

² *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 14th January, 1799, No. 14.

While communicating this news J. Collins wrote to the Governor-General from Anupshahr on the 2nd January, 1799: "If the above information be true, and my private agent has generally been correct in his intelligence, I think it likely that Zaman Shah will soon feel it expedient to recross the Attock from his inability to raise money for the payment of his troops."

Some Sikh chiefs, however, secretly indicated a desire to the Diwan to form an alliance with the Shah. This was soon discovered by shrewd Sikh chiefs, and it excited animosity amongst them. Eventually on the 15th December, a new oath of fidelity was taken by them, and they solemnly engaged to act in concert against the common enemy.¹

The Sikhs therefore redoubled their efforts to harass the Shah. They organized several foraging parties and despatched them in all directions to cut off the supplies coming to Lahore. The Shah's camp at the capital was always kept in a state of alarm, as the Sikhs attacked it every night with musketry fire. So terrified were the Durrani that "none dare go out against them". A guard of 500 horse was stationed day and night to protect the Ravi bridge.

On the 20th December the Sikhs had a skirmish with a foraging party of the Afghans across the Ravi towards Eminabad. A few men were killed and wounded on both sides. The Sikhs carried off some camels and ponies.

The Shah made a compact with Nidhan Singh of Sheikhpura for a tribute of Rs. 25,000, of which Rs. 10,000 were to be paid in instalments, while for Rs. 15,000 imperial camels sent to graze were to be protected.

On the 21st December Ranjit Singh and Dal Singh involved themselves in a fight with a Durrani detachment. Another party of the Sikhs brought ten horses which they had seized from a Durrani foraging squad.

Wafadar Khan sent another agent named Neki Singh to Amritsar on the 22nd December to negotiate with the Sikhs for peace. Sahib Singh Bedi on behalf of the Sikh chiefs declined to entertain the proposal, remarking that "they had taken the country by the sword and would preserve it in the same manner."

While Neki Singh was still at Amritsar some stray parties of the Sikhs were attacking Lahore continuously. On the 23rd December Shah Zaman ordered his tents to be pitched

¹ *Ibid.*, 11th January, 1799, No. 35.

inside the fort, owing to insecurity created by the Sikhs. He also suspected that Sher Muhammad Khan was in league with the Sikhs. The Sikhs had grown so bold as to attack the very suburbs of Lahore in broad daylight. The Shah ordered all but the Peshawari Gate to be kept shut day and night. A guard of thirty men was appointed at each gate. Nobody was allowed to enter or leave the city except on strict inquiries made from him.¹

24. *Disagreement in the Durrani Camp*

Shah Zaman's disappointment was growing daily. He had not succeeded in crushing the Sikhs. The expedition to Delhi still appeared a mere dream. Troops were hard-pressed for want of money. Besides, disagreement in his camp was steadily on the increase.

In the afternoon on the 23rd December the Shah held a conversation with Wafadar Khan, and told him, that he had been at Lahore nearly a month, but the country was not regulated, nor were the Sikhs extirpated. Wafadar Khan requested the Shah to remain in Lahore for another month, adding that some *zamindars* had paid tribute, and others were coming to settle it. The Sikhs would be properly punished, and afterwards an Afghan viceroy with a strong army for the preservation of peace would be appointed.

The Durrani chiefs represented that notwithstanding the chief ministership was invested in a Sadozai instead of a Bamizai, the troops which were formerly well-paid had not enough to live upon. They expressed their inability to serve under Wafadar Khan and tried to persuade the Shah to restore Sher Muhammad Khan to that office.²

On the 25th December Shah Zaman ordered all the nobles to array their men and material for inspection in the Shalamar Garden. At this time all the troops, their leaders excepted, complained that the Shah on marching

¹ *Ibid.*, 11th January, 1799, Nos. 35, 40; 25th January, 1799, No. 18.

² *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 25th January, 1799, No. 19.

towards Lahore had prohibited them from plundering, murdering, carrying off cattle, or making slaves, and having now brought them to Lahore kept them as if in prison and would not suffer them to plunder; but on the contrary tried them in a court of justice. They added that on such terms they could not serve; but if he allowed them to plunder they would certainly serve him with fidelity; or if this were disallowed, they required regularly to be paid, remarking that what they then received was scarcely enough to support their lives.

The Shah replied that if plunder were permitted, it would be disgraceful to him, and therefore he would never consent to it, but if they chose they might return home.

The nobles and troops remained in the Garden; but the Shah being displeased returned to the fort, having ordered all troops, stores, baggage and bazaars to cross over the Ravi to Shahdara.

Sher Muhammad Khan attended the Shah and observed that His Majesty should not mind what the troops had said. He had come on an important expedition, and should not give it up for a trivial matter. He insisted on Shah's settling the affairs of the Panjab first, as his immediate return march would be disgraceful not only to him but to the whole Afghan nation. All the *sardars* supported the ex-Wazir, declaring that they were entirely devoted to him, and prevailed upon him to relinquish his design. The Shah said that "he wished no person to be hurt without his orders."¹

25. Differences among the Sikhs

Meanwhile Neki Singh, the Durrani agent at Amritsar, was achieving a fair measure of success in his negotiations with the Sikh chiefs. On the 24th December the Sikh *sardars* held a council at the residence of Dal Singh. They decided that they must keep up appearance with Shah

¹ *Ibid*, No. 20.

Zaman, observing that if the Shah thought it proper to fight, they considered themselves a match for him. Tara Singh declined to approve of this proposal. It was therefore resolved that each might act as he thought fit.

Some other Sikh chiefs were coming to Amritsar. Milkha Singh also joined them at the head of 500 horse. War material was pouring into the city.

On the 25th December the Sikh chiefs told Neki Singh that he was well aware of the poor resources of the country, which rendered revenues just sufficient to pay their troops, and nothing was left with them to pay tribute to the Shah. They requested Neki Singh to prevail on the Shah to return home. Neki Singh gave on behalf of the Shah two pairs of shawls and three *sarpeches* to Ranjit Singh and one pair of shawls to Tara Singh. These Sikh chiefs gave to Neki Singh for the Shah seven bows and seven quivers full of fine arrows. Ghasi Singh on the part of Sahib Singh and Mohan Singh on the part of Ranjit Singh were to accompany Neki Singh.

At the same time the Sikhs did not neglect precautionary measures. "The Sikhs are on the alarm, keep the saddles on their horses, and are under arms day and night."

At the time of departure of the Durrani agent Ranjit Singh and Sahib Singh granted *khul'ats* and Rs. 500 in cash to Neki Singh. They informed him that they were prepared to return all the booty captured from the Shah's troops if they were favoured.

By way of further instructions "Ranjit Singh told Neki Singh that if the Shah would appoint him to the charge of the Fort of Lahore, he would pay one lakh of rupees as *nazarana*."¹

¹ *Ibid*, No. 24.

Sir J. H. Craig expressed his opinion to Lord Wellesley regarding the attitude of the Sikhs from Fatahgarh on the 13th December, 1798:—

"Were the Seiks united as nation, I should think it scarcely possible that they would ever enter into the Shah's interests, they must know that their existence is incompatible with them, and they must feel that by forwarding that Prince's views, they would only render him the

Neki Singh left Amritsar on the 28th December accompanied by *vakils* of all the Sikh chiefs who had collected at Amritsar. Dal Singh came to see him off for six miles from Amritsar.

The Wazir granted interviews to all the Sikh chiefs and their agents who had come to Lahore in the afternoon on the 29th December. They were warmly received, and shown special marks of favour. The Sikh *vakils* sent letters to Amritsar where they were received on the 31st December. They stated that "when they arrived within five *kos* of that city, a *Sardar* with 1,000 horse met and escorted them into the town, and that His Majesty's *Umara* were pleased with their arrival."

26. *Fight with the Nakais*

While peace parleys were going on, some Nakai Sikhs gathered at Chunian. Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur was terrified, and on the 29th December he requested the Shah to send a Durrani force against them. The Afghan troops marched with lightning speed and took the Sikhs by surprise. A desperate engagement was the result which lasted for several hours. The Durrani then suddenly returned to Lahore.

Ghazi-ud-din Khan held a conference with the Wazir, and observed that as the Sikh *vakils* were expected, it was improper to attack the Sikhs. He advised that as the Sikhs were in possession of a large part of his majesty's Indian

more perfect master of their fate; but in their present distracted and disunited state, where no union or concert is to be expected, where no prospect appears of successful opposition, where mutual jealousy and distrust must magnify the danger and aggravate their fears,—it is not highly probable, that distant considerations will be sacrificed to the interests of the moment,—is not likely, that viewing it as the only possible means of securing their personal safety, they may be anxious to anticipate each other in meeting the Shah's advances." *Montgomery*, i, 366-7.

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 25th January, 1799, No. 27.

dominions, they should be asked to accompany the Shah to Delhi. The Wazir replied that it was for the same purpose they had been required to attend, and the Shah had halted at Lahore so long.

Two Sikh chiefs while foraging fell into the hands of the Durrani near Lahore in the afternoon of the 29th December. "Their hair was cut off, and they were dismissed after having been made Musalmans."

Ranjit Singh was enraged on hearing of both of these incidents. He took 1,000 choice horse and set out on the road to Lahore to retaliate upon the Durrani. He was followed by Chait Singh and Sahib Singh with 2,000 horse. Dal Singh persuaded these chiefs to return pointing out that it was improper to commit any depredations until the return of their *vakils* from the Shah.¹

27. *Shah Zaman retires from the Panjab*

From the 1st to the 3rd January, 1799, the Shah held repeated conferences in private with the Wazir and Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur, who never retired from the presence until 9 o'clock in the evening each day. The Sikh *vakils* from Amritsar were admitted to several interviews with the Wazir, and received from him a regular allowance of *ghi*, sugar, rice, goats, etc. Ghazi-ud-din Khan used his influence in accommodating matters with the Sikhs. On the recommendation of Nizam-ud-din Khan garrisons of Shah's troops were re-established at Gujrat, Ramnagar, Sialkot and other places. The salt made at a place twenty miles from Lahore was farmed to a *Mahajan* for one year for fifty-two thousand rupees.

Nizam-ud-din Khan was also required to prepare a comparative statement of the income of each *mahal* comprising in the province of Lahore, showing revenue under the Mughal Emperors and the present regime. The public servants were directed to purchase lead, powder, cannon balls and cattle for artillery.

¹ *Ibid.*, No. 26.

So far everything went well ; but the Shah's mind was not free from anxiety. The soldiery was discontented on account of the Shah's preventing them from general plunder and rapine. Indeed his troops "were in such a great distress for money as to be reduced to the necessity of selling their apparel in order to procure provisions." The Shah was grieved at this state of affairs ; but his good nature, just disposition and the youthful age, he being only twenty-eight, would not permit him to be cruel.

Meanwhile treachery and diplomacy were at work to upset all the plans of the Afghan invader. Mehdi Ali Khan, originally a Persian, had settled in India. His notoriety of character brought public disgrace upon him at Hyderabad. He then took up service under Mr. Duncan at Ghazipur. Later on, when Shah Zaman started on his last Indian campaign, Duncan, as Governor of Bombay, under instructions of Lord Wellesley, despatched Mehdi Ali Khan to Iran to cause rebellion in Afghanistan with the assistance of the Persian Government. Mehdi Ali Khan discharged his duties very successfully. Fatah Ali Shah, the King of Iran, marched to invade Khorasan in order to divert the attention of Shah Zaman from India. He advanced as far as Sabzwār, 642 miles from Kabul. At the same time Mehdi Ali Khan incited Prince Mahmud of Herat to raise the standard of rebellion.¹

This news was brought to Shah Zaman at noon on the 3rd January, 1799 by Ghose Khan's special messengers from Herat accompanied by a letter from Prince Kaiser to certify its authenticity, and calling upon the Shah to return to Afghanistan instantly.

On hearing this the Shah at once decided to retreat and ordered for his advanced tents to be pitched at Shahdara and instructed to have all the camp equipage, bazaars, etc. sent after them.

¹ *Secret Letters from Court of Directors, 1786 to 1801*, p. 228; *Montgomery*, i. 428, 432-3, 610-11; ii 110; *Kirpal*, 3; *Malleon*, 306.

Mehdi Ali Khan received a reward of about three lakhs of rupees

Then the Sikh *vakil*s were granted an interview. They presented their *nazars* on behalf of their masters. They praised the Shah for his high character and justice, expressing the hope "that the Panjab would be allowed to continue in their possession as *madad mu'ash*" (as a means of livelihood). The Shah was pleased with their address, and answered: "It is well. I leave this country to you free from assessment (*mu'af*); continue to occupy and cultivate it with confidence." He then bestowed a *doshala* upon every one of them, and permitted them to depart.

So strict and so urgent were the orders of the Shah for the immediate return journey that at 3 o'clock in the afternoon the camp baggage and Shah's own effects were packed up, and then sent across the Ravi to Shahdara.

In the morning of the 4th January Shah Zaman mounted an elephant along with the Wazir and accompanied by his nobles crossed over to Shahdara. Ghazi-ud-din Khan accompanied him, but Bhambu Khan and Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur were allowed to take leave.

The Sikhs were constantly in touch with the happenings at Lahore. Consequently Chait Singh and Milkha Singh journeyed from Amritsar in the night between the 3rd and 4th January, and encamped in the neighbourhood of Lahore. No sooner did the Shah cross the Ravi than both the Sikh chiefs entered Lahore and established their rule. Most of the other Sikh *sardars* also retired to their own territories. Only four *sardars*—Sahib Singh Bedi, Budh Singh, Gulab Singh and Jodh Singh—continued to stay at Amritsar.

Shah Zaman had to endure great hardships on his way back. The rains fell in torrents almost daily. The road was broken up and became impassable. The river Jhelum was in flood and most of his artillery and baggage were lost while crossing the river. The soldiers discontented and worn out either fell to the rear or deserted him. The plundering tribes took advantage of the Shah's distress and stripped the stragglers of their baggage.

Shah Zaman reached Peshawar on the 30th January, 1799; but owing to severe cold and with a view to reorganize his troops to save them from destruction while moving on the Khyber road he stayed there for a month and a half. He left Peshawar on the 13th March, 1799.

This was the last Muslim invasion of India. The Khalsa though disunited had erected a wall of concrete against the north-western flood which had carried everything before it during the past eight hundred years. The tide turned towards it two or three times more, struck against it and beat back.

Thus ended the stream of immigration of needy adventurers from Turkistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan, which had supplied to various Muslim kingdoms in this country nearly all of their distinguished statesmen, eminent politicians, illustrious administrators and celebrated generals, the Indian Musalmans producing almost no celebrity during this long period.¹

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 25th January, 1799, No. 28; 28th January, 1799, No. 16; 10th May, 1799, No. 7; *Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794-1799, J. Collins to the Governor-General, 10th January, 1799; *Elphinstone*, 572; *Sohan Lal*, II, 39.

About the close of 1799 a conspiracy was organized in Kabul by the leading chiefs mostly owing to the insolent behaviour of Wafadar Khan. The plot was betrayed and the conspirators including Payendah Khan, the most influential leader of the Barakzai tribe, were executed. Fatah Khan, the eldest son of Payendah Khan, escaped to Khorasan where he joined Prince Mahmud. At his instigation Mahmud captured Farah (528 miles from Kabul) and Kandahar (315 miles from Kabul). Shah Zaman advanced to oppose his brother and met him at Sar-i-asp. The astute Fatah Khan won over Shah Zaman's chief ally Ahmad Khan Nurzai of Jalalabad. Shah Zaman took to flight and sought shelter with one of his best supporters named Mulla Ashiq. He betrayed the Shah to Mahmud who by this time had taken Kabul. Shah Zaman, while proceeding to Kabul as a prisoner, was met on the way by Asad Khan, a brother of Fatah Khan, who was accompanied by a surgeon. A lance was applied to the Shah's eyes on the spot, and thus deprived of eyesight he was shut up in the Bala Hissar. He survived for nearly half a century, and remained for many years a quiet and neglected prisoner of the British Government at Ludhiana. *Narayan Kaul*, 205a-206a; *Ferrier*, 119-28; *Malleeson*, 306-14; *Kaye*, I, 17-23; *Sykes*, I, 380-2; *Abdul Majid*, 131, 133.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEGINNING OF SIKH MONARCHY, 1799

1. Possession of Hasan Abdal and Attock

IN the discomfiture of Shah Zaman lay the opportunity for Ranjit Singh, who, though younger than the Shah by ten years, and still in his teens, was possessed of greater ability, stronger resolution and better leadership than the Afghan monarch. For some years past the authority of the Sukarchakia chief had been growing predominant among the Sikhs. Particularly, during the last invasion of Shah Zaman his character had deeply impressed not only the Sikh chiefs, but also the Durrani Emperor;

On the withdrawal of Shah Zaman from the Panjab Ranjit Singh recovered Rohtas, and allowing Milkha Singh to retain Rawalpindi, captured the forts of Hasan Abdal and Attock and established there his own garrisons. Ranjit Singh also conceived the bold design of conquering Kashmir, and sent an expedition under Sahib Singh of Gujrat. The Governor of Kashmir was terrified and sought for immediate assistance from Kabul. Ranjit Singh, not to provoke a fresh Durrani invasion, recalled Sahib Singh, and decided to establish his sway in the Panjab.¹

2. Eagerness to take Lahore

The first step in achieving this object was to seize the provincial capital whose possession gave its owner superiority over all the rest, and without which he could not carry

¹ *Sindhia's Affairs*, 1793—1799, J. Collins to the Governor-General, dated Fatahgarh, 24th April and 4th August, 1799; *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings*, 10th May, 1799, No 7; 15th August, 1799, No. 4

out the plans he had formed of welding the *Sikh misls* into one commonwealth with himself as its head.

It was for this reason that he was going to submit to Shah Zaman in December last when he had promised him a tribute of one lakh of rupees if he were given the charge of the fort of Lahore. This was undoubtedly the shortest cut to the goal ; but it did not materialise. The Shah might have agreed to the proposal, had it not been for the fact that among all the Sikh chiefs of the Panjab he was afraid of Ranjit Singh, and the Shah was therefore not prepared to give Ranjit Singh pre-eminence and thus to provide him an opportunity of building an edifice of the Sikh power which could not be broken by him on some future occasion. It was only on this consideration that the Shah seems to have overcome the temptation of rejecting the offer of one lakh of rupees, particularly when he was extremely hard-pressed for paucity of funds, and when the addition of a small sum of money to the royal treasury was a great relief.

Ranjit Singh though disappointed at the failure of his attempt to win the favour of the Shah still tried to please him. When Shah Zaman halted at Gujranwala on his return journey Ranjit Singh instructed his men to supply provisions and transport to the Shah to enable him to pass through his territory comfortably. Besides, he checked the Sikh chiefs from making night attacks on the Shah's camp.

This undoubtedly produced good effect on the mind of the Shah ; but still he was not inclined to accept Ranjit Singh's offer. He had, however, not gone far, when circumstances compelled him to countenance the scheme of the young Sukarchakia chief.

At this time winter rains were heavily falling in the western Panjab. By the time Shah Zaman reached the Jhelum, the river was in flood. While crossing it Shah's twelve guns fell into the river. This was a serious loss as the guns were badly needed in Afghanistan in the coming struggle with his brother. Furthermore, he realized that he

would not be able to keep the Panjab directly under his control as disturbances were frequently arising in his dominions. Shah Zaman therefore wrote to Ranjit Singh to take out the guns and send them to him at Kabul, promising in return to grant him the viceroyalty of the Panjab.¹

Ranjit Singh resolved to avail himself of this offer. He extricated eight² guns, four months later and speedily despatched them to Kabul. But Ranjit Singh would not entirely depend upon the Shah. He believed in self-effort and continued his endeavours.

3. Disorder in the Capital

Lahore was at this time in the hands of the triumvirate Sikh chiefs—Sahib Singh son of Gujar Singh, Chait Singh son of Lahna Singh and Mohar Singh son of Sobha Singh. Sahib Singh generally resided at Gujrat. Disagreement prevailed between the remaining two chiefs who frequently resorted to fighting. In consequence the people were suffering. "Chait Singh son of Lahna Singh deceased and Mohar Singh are at Lahore, and commit great oppression on the

¹ *Tarikh-i-Sultani*, 167-8; *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 62; *Gyan Singh*, 962; *Ali-ud-din*, 219:—

"در بی عرصه که عبور رایات از گذر دریائے جہلم بوقوع آمد از کمال سرعت و آمد آب بطغیانی دوزاده ضرب توپ غرق دریا شدند در آنجا دستخط خاص بنام مہاراجہ شرف اصدار یافت کہ ہرگاہ آب دریا فرو شود تو پہا بر آورده روانی حضور نمایند و صوبہ داری سلطنت لاہور بشما مرجعت فرسودہ باشد"

J. Collins wrote to the Governor-General from Fatahgarh on the 14th March, 1799:—"My latest advices from Lahore mention that Zaman Shah is still detained at Peshawar by the severity of the frost and they further state that in his retreat from Punjab, the Shah lost the greatest part of his artillery by the sudden rising of the river Jhelum."

² The remaining four guns, one of iron and three of brass, were recovered in 1823, and were kept in his own personal arsenal

inhabitants of the city.”¹

Nizam-ud-din Khan of Kasur indicated the line of action Ranjit Singh should adopt. The Afghan chief finding distrust rampant in Lahore won over several notable Muslim leaders to his side, and with their assistance aimed at seizing the capital. He marched at the head of a strong force ; but the secret had leaked out and the Sikh *sardars* were ready to check his evil designs. Nizam-ud-din Khan thereupon gave up the attempt.

4. Kadi Khan sent to Lahore

Ranjit Singh decided to adopt the same tactics, but to act more cautiously. He deputed Kadi Khan, his personal attendant, to get the views of some of the celebrated Arāin chiefs. Kadi Khan came to Lahore, sounded the ideas of the Arāin leaders, particularly of Mehar Mokham Din who occupied a prominent position among them. He reported that such a great object could not be effected by Arāins alone ; but it needed the support of all, and for that purpose a person of distinguished social position should be deputed.

5. Abdur Rahman's Mission

The choice fell on Qazi Abdur Rahman of Ramnagar. The adroit Qazi met Mian Muhammad Ashiq, Mian Jan Muhammad of village Laveriyan, the religious guide of Moran *kanjri*, Mehar Mohkam Din of Nawankot, the confidential agent of Chait Singh, Abid Khan of Atari, Muhammad Azim and Hafiz Muhammad of Baghbanpura, Mehar Shadi *katarband*, Ahmad Khan Bhindar, Hakīm Hākīm Rai, Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh, Muhammad Baqar, Muhammad Tahar, Maulvi Muhammad Salim and Mufti Muhammad Mukarram. All of them agreed to accept Ranjit Singh as the chief of Lahore. In order to assure him of their fidelity they signed a petition, and sent it by Hakīm Hākīm Rai who accompanied the Qazi.

¹ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department, 24th December, 1798. No. 7.*

The success of the Qazi's diplomatic mission highly pleased Ranjit Singh who conferred upon him a robe of honour. He sent him again to Lahore to settle the plans of operation. It was decided that Ranjit Singh should attack the Lohari Gate of the city, which after a brief resistance would be thrown open.

6. March to Batala

At this Ranjit Singh collected his troops and made necessary preparations. Then he came to Batala where he was joined by Sada Kaur, his mother-in-law, a lady of great ability and masculine intrepidity, and "one of the most remarkable women in Punjab history."¹ The total number of their troops seems to be about 5,000.²

7. Advance to Lahore

From Batala they came to Majitha where they were attended by Muhammad Azim *Baghban* who had gone from Lahore to receive and guide the invading forces. With a view to suppress rumours it was given out that the Sikh chieftain was on his way to Amritsar to pay respects at the Hari Mandir.

Travelling in the night by avoiding Amritsar on the way Ranjit Singh arrived at the Delhi Gate of Lahore in the early hours of the morning on the 4th July, 1799. The Gate was closed and strongly guarded. Ranjit Singh thereupon retired and encamped near the tomb of Shah Balawal. At mid-day he moved to the Garden of Wazir Khan.³

Here he was attended by Mehar Mohkam Din. Mohar Singh sent to Ranjit Singh sweets as a mark of hospitality. Ranjit Singh informed the Sikh chief that he was bound for Gujranwala, and requested him to arrange for boats to

¹ *Rajas of the Punjab*, 518.

² *Raj Khalsa*, iii, 64; *Latif*, 349. *Sohan Lal*, ii, 41, puts the number at 25,000, which is evidently a much inflated estimate.

³ At this place now stand the buildings of the Central Museum and the Panjab Public Library.

cross the river. Ranjit Singh then visited the *Ghat*, and after giving rewards to the boatmen he returned in the evening.

The nobles of the city who were a party to this affair came to the conclusion that opening the Lohari Gate which was in their care was improper and disgraceful. They suggested that they would help Ranjit Singh's forces in breaking the wall between the Khizri and Kashmiri Gates. This decision was conveyed to Ranjit Singh rather too late, as by this time his soldiers had invested the Lohari Gate before dawn on the morning of the 5th July.

8. Attack on the Lohari Gate

The Gate did not open, and Ranjit Singh applied his artillery. The strong defences of the Gate defied his attempt. The Sukarchakia chief fought for a couple of hours, and then retired to Chah Wiran to take rest, and there decided to besiege the city.

The nobles were afraid of the horrors of a siege and informed Ranjit Singh that they would open the Gate the following morning. He agreed and offered tempting terms to the nobles for performing the deed faithfully.

Early in the morning on the 6th July Ranjit Singh advanced towards the Lohari Gate, which was strongly guarded under the personal supervision of Chait Singh. The guards deceived him by the alarming news that Ranjit Singh was attacking the Delhi Gate, which was actually invested by the Kanhiya forces under *Mai Sada Kaur*. Chait Singh immediately hurried to that place, and in his absence the Lohari Gate was thrown open.

9. Mohar Singh Captured

Ranjit Singh suddenly dashed into the town. He first attacked *Haveli Lakhpat Rai*, which was the place of residence of Mohar Singh. Some fighting took place inside the mansion, after which Mohar Singh escaped and hid himself in the house of a straw seller (بوسى فروش). He was

captured and produced before Ranjit Singh who greeted him smilingly, and allowed him to retire in safety to his lands with all his moveable property.

Meanwhile Delhi Gate also fell in Sada Kaur's hands. Chait Singh fled to the fort. Sada Kaur then joined Ranjit Singh.

10. Occupation of the Fort

Afterwards Ranjit Singh made for the fort. Chait Singh ordered his gunners stationed in the towers of the Badshahi Mosque to open fire on the invaders. Firing continued from noon till evening. Finding himself unable to cope with the situation he opened negotiations through Sada Kaur. He was permitted to retire in peace to village Waniki which was granted to him as a *jaqir*. The fort came into Ranjit Singh's possession on the 7th July.

This young chief's first measures were dictated by that practical common sense which distinguished the execution of his plans. Ranjit Singh held a great darbar in the fort which was attended by leading personages of the city. On this occasion he richly rewarded all those who had helped him in the enterprise. Mehar Mohkam Din, the keeper of the Lohari Gate, was honoured with the title of *Baba*, and was appointed the administrator of the city of Lahore. Other persons received the titles of *Sahib* and *Meharban*. Mai Sada Kaur was given congee after a few days.

11. Receipt of a *Khila't*

About the close of the year 1799, Ranjit Singh received a rich *khila't* from Shah Zaman in acknowledgment of his service for conveying the guns to Kabul. "Ever since Ranjit Singh obtained the *khila't* of the Shah," wrote J. Collins to the Governor-General on the 11th May, 1800, "he announces himself as chief of Lahore on the part of Zaman Shah." This attitude was adopted by him with a view

to acquire greater authority and to legalize his usurpation of Lahore.¹

12. Conclusion

With Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore an important stage is reached which forms a landmark in the history of the Sikhs. Henceforward it centres almost exclusively in this great man. This event marks the beginning of the downfall of the independent Sikh chiefs on the one hand, and the establishment of Sikh monarchy on the other.

The Sikh *misls* had served their purpose. From the point of extension of Sikh power the system worked fairly well for a generation. The Sikh territory spread as far north-west as the Indus, and in the east up to the Jumna; while their predatory excursions reached Multan and Dera-jat in the south-west and to Garhwal and Rohilkhand towards the south-east.

But in the absence of a common enemy and common danger the *misls* had fallen a prey to mutual rivalry and jealousy, which ended in anarchy. It must have been a dreary time for the peace-loving people, when the trader and the peasant had to arm themselves, when even women received training in the use of weapons of war, when battles were fought to settle the boundaries of villages, when human blood was shed for the disputed possession of the borders of a field, and when men were killed in retaliation of plundered cattle.

That such a state of things lasted so long was obviously due to the circumstance of the absence of a man who by

¹ *Imperial Records, Foreign Department, Miscellaneous Records*, Vol. No. 206, pp. 55—8; *Secret Department*, J. Collins to the Governor-General dated at Fatahgarh, 5th April, and 21st April, 1800, Letters Nos. 17, 18; *Sindhia's Affairs*, 1794—1799, J. Collins to the Governor-General dated at Fatahgarh, 12th September, 1799; *Sindhia's Affairs and Early Stages of the Second Maratha War*, 1799—1804, edited by Dr. Raghubir Singh, Letter No. 21—A. Enclosure; *Sohan Lal*, ii, 40-4; *Bute Shah*, 315b-316a; *Ali-ud-din*, 219a—222b.

a combination of political insight with physical valour, and of thoughtful planning with resolute execution was capable of unifying the heterogeneous materials and establishing a kingdom in their stead.

The time arrived and also the man. The prescient eye of the traveller Forster in 1783, shortly after the birth of Ranjit Singh could foreshadow this change :—"Should any future cause call forth the combined efforts of the Sicques to maintain the existence of empire and religion, we may see some ambitious chief led on by his genius and success, and, absorbing the power of his associates, display, from the ruins of their commonwealth, the standard of monarchy. The page of history is filled with the like effects, springing from the like causes. Under such a form of government, I have little hesitation in saying, that the Sicques would be soon advanced to the first rank amongst the native princes of Hindostan; and would become a terror to the surrounding states."¹

¹ *Forster*, i, 340. George Thomas, the Irish adventurer who personally came into contact with the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs at this time held pessimistic views about the future of the Sikhs. He considered the appearance of a "chief of experience and enterprise" amongst them "highly improbable," *George Thomas*, 104.

This observation was also correct, as the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs have not produced up to now even a single great man.

CHAPTER IX

NATURE AND CHARACTER OF SIKH ADMINISTRATION

1. *Introductory*

THE Sikhs¹ combined the most resolute courage with the most cautious prudence. They showed as much concern for the prosperity of the peasant and trader, and displayed as much anxiety for relieving and easing the people as they did for military matters. Thus they demonstrated that those who had been down-trodden for centuries were worthy of command not only in the field of battle, but also in the office of government.

Most of the writers on the Sikhs have no good word for the administration of the Sikh chiefs. It is customary with them to deprecate their rule as harsh and oppressive. If compared with the conditions of law and order as prevailing in highly developed countries to-day, there was indeed much to be desired by way of improvement. But it is extremely improper and unjust to judge the Sikh *Sardars* of the eighteenth century by modern standards. Their time differed greatly from ours, and in consequence the procedure of the Sikh chiefs was in keeping with those times. If their rule was sometimes harsh, it was also paternal; if it was occasionally strict, it was sympathetic; and if it at times appeared crude and rough, it was mild and tender.

Quite contrary to the present day spirit in this country the relations between the ruler and the ruled were cordial and intimate. Many of the *sardars* were as obscure and insignificant, as they were weak and poor. Many had nothing

¹ The last two chapters apply to all the Sikhs in the Panjab between the Indus and the Jumna.

more to command than a ruined castle, a few square miles of land, a few hundred rupees of revenue and an army of a few soldiers. All this did not matter for the subjects. Riches and forces of the chief were not the criterion for the subjects to render him ready and willing obedience. The strength of the rulers did not lie in their material prosperity; but it struck its roots deep in the affection of the people. The Sikh chiefs regarded their subjects as members of their family, and the people paid them by their sincere devotion and deep respect.

Was it not a marvel to see the Sikh chiefs squatting on the ground in the midst of their subjects, plainly dressed, unattended by an escort, without any paraphernalia of government, talking, laughing and joking as if with their comrades, using no diplomacy with them, but having straightforward dealings, simple manners, upright mind and sincere language?

2. *Administration in General*

A glimpse into the general administration of the Sikhs can best be had from the account of an Englishman who travelled from Buriya on the Jumna to Lahore in 1808. This picture will present a remarkable contrast to that described by another author as "an administration without law, an aristocracy without conscience, roads without traffic, and fields overgrown by forest." The traveller says:—

"On the 15th April last I crossed the Jumna.....and arrived at the town of Borea.....I was much gratified with the general appearance of the country, then in a high state of cultivation, affording satisfactory proof of the fertility of the soil, and industry of the people.....

"The people were well dressed, and bore every appearance of health, ease, and contentment; the effects of a just and good government, to which the inhabitants of those districts are happily subject; and in proof of this observation, I may mention that, during the whole-course of my enquiries, I heard not one cause of

complaint. The cultivators are assessed to the amount of one half of the produce of their crops, which is paid in kind to the chief, as money currency is very limited throughout the Punjab. Although that is the general rate of assessment, yet every allowance is made to the cultivator for unfavourable seasons, and every species of oppression carefully guarded against by the chief, who, although he is absolute, rules with such moderation and justice, that he is beloved and revered by his people, whose happiness he studies to promote. Though vested with uncontrolled power, his administration of justice is mild and equitable. He seldom ~~dooms~~ to death even for murder; so lenient is the system of polity, that crimes of that heinous nature are punished by the temporary imprisonment of the criminal, by corporal chastisement, and confiscation of property of every denomination, which the chief converts to his own use. All offences, whether murder or the slightest misdemeanor, are under the cognizance of the *kotewall*, who submits a detail of all the cases that come before him to the chief, by whom alone punishments are awarded, agreeable to his will. This system of judicial administration seems to have a happy effect, in so much that capital crimes are rarely perpetrated, and the police in the different towns is so well regulated that persons of all nations enter them with confidence, and meet with no molestation while they remain. The same attention is shown to an English gentleman as in our own territory, by the *kotewall*, who readily sends the usual supplies of provision and for which he will receive no payment. He also furnishes a guard of *chokeedars* at night.

“This part of the country is so completely¹ divided and sub-divided into small independencies, that many of the villages, according to the information I obtained, are governed by two chieftains, one exercising independent jurisdiction over one portion of the inhabitants, and the other over the remainder, each being entirely independent

of the other, and this is pretty nearly the state of government throughout the country extending to the Sutledge.

"Mulana and all the country lying between it and Umbala are dependencies of Dia Cour and Roop Cour, relicts of Goorbakhsh Singh and Lal Singh, the deceased *zemindars* of those districts. They can bring into the field between seven and eight thousand fighting men, horse and foot. Their families reside in a well-built citadel surrounded by a brick wall with round bastions... ..The country between Mulana and Umbala appears fertile, and is extremely well cultivated.... ..The inhabitants throughout this country, and as far as the Sutledge, bear a high character for hospitality and kindness to strangers. Their benevolence is not narrowed by bigotry or prejudice, and disclaims the distinctions of religion or complexion. They are particularly attentive to travellers of all castes or countries. The chief of every town makes a point of subsisting all poor and needy travellers from his own funds, a part of which are set aside for that purpose, and when that falls short, from an increased number of indigent claimants, their wants are supplied by a subscription made from the principal inhabitants of the place. It is very pleasing to travel through the towns and villages of this country. The inhabitants receive the stranger with an air of welcome that prepossesses him in their favour. They are, at the same time, courteous and respectful, contrary to what the traveller experiences in Mussulman towns, where he is looked upon with contempt and regarded as an unwelcome intruder. The character of the Sikhs had been represented to me in a very favourable light and my own observations confirmed all that I had heard in their favour. They are just and amiable in their social intercourse, and affectionate in their domestic relations. One quality particularly raises the character of the Sikhs above all other Asiatics, and that is, their higher veneration for truth. Both as

a people and as individuals, they may be considered as much less addicted to the low artifices of evasion, lying, or dissimulation, than any other race of Asiatics. Implicit dependence may be placed upon their promise, in all matters either of public or private concern; and if a Sikh declares himself your friend, he will not disappoint your confidence; if, on the other hand, he bears enmity to any one, he declares it without reserve..... Upon the whole they are a plain, manly, hospitable, and industrious people, and by far the best race I have ever met in India. They have all the essential qualities of a good soldier¹: in their persons they are hardy and athletic; of active habits, patient, faithful, and brave. They are strongly attached to their chiefs, and will never desert them, while they are well treated.....

"Confiscation of property and imprisonment is in general, as before noted, the only punishment inflicted for wilful murder. This perhaps, in most countries, might render crimes of that sanguinary nature more frequent; here it does by no means appear to have that effect; and the penalty is found to be sufficient; for murders I believe, are far less frequent than in any country equally populous; which I think a convincing proof of the good fellowship, subsisting among the inhabitants of these countries, and of the general character they bear for moderation and good manners.....

"At Phagwara on the 27th.—Rates of articles; Wheat flour, one maund per rupee; barley, one maund 10 seers; gram, 1 maund; *mote*, 1 maund; *mungh*, 35 seers; *oord*, 35 seers; *kund seah* or *goor*, 1 maund 15 seers; and rice 20 seers per rupee.

"The *singhs* being generally devoted to pleasure, give

¹ The same writer later on says: "They make good soldiers, are capable of bearing great fatigue, and can march from 40 to 45 miles a day, for a month together." *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1809, p. 439.

Victor Jacquemont, a French traveller, also testifies to this fact: "The Afghans are very inferior to the Seikhs." *Letters from India*, ., 232

every encouragement to the *nautch* girls.....

" Syphilitic complaints are but very little known in the Punjab.....

" Good camels are procurable here (at Amritsar) in great numbers at 50 rupees each.

" It (Lahore) has a good bazar, but it is not inhabited by people of any wealth or consequence ; Zemaun Shah having on his coming to this place eight years ago, plundered it of thirty lacks of rupees, since which time the principal bankers and merchants have considered Amrutsur the safer place of the two, and reside chiefly at the latter city.

" On the 23rd, I waited upon the Rajah Runjeit Singh, who received me very politely, in a grand, lofty, spacious saloon of the palace, all of marble, and inlaid with red and other coloured stones, pretty much resembling that of Agra.....

" The Rajah is about twenty-seven years old, he is blind of his left eye, which he lost in his infancy, by small-pox, he is rather below the middle stature, and of very affable unaffected manners, active and fond of exercise on horseback, which he takes early every morning. He is considered brave and clever in the field, quick in his conception, and possesses a very good natural understanding. He asked me a number of questions, and first as to my religion; he did not detain me long upon this point of inquiry, but hastened to subjects better suited to his comprehension, and in which he seemed to feel a more lively interest. He particularly inquired what number of cavalry one of our battalions could beat. I told him thirty thousand with ease, which he seemed to think rather too great a number ; after pausing a moment or two, observed that he believed they were a match for 20,000. He then asked me if I understood the discipline of cavalry and infantry, and if his troops could be made equal to ours? If I could lay a gun well ; cast cannon, and make small arms, etc. etc. Almost all his questions were upon military topics."¹

¹ *Asiatic Annual Register*. 1809, pp 421-33.

3. *Peace and Progress*

The Sikhs knew how essential peace and order was to the progress of the country. Thus, though "they frequently plundered non-Sikh territories, and indulged in mutual warfare with their co-religionists, they maintained good government in the territories under their personal control. All the contemporary authorities with one voice declare that the cultivator in particular and all other people in general flourished under the rule of Sikh chiefs.

As early as 1776 Colonel Polier wrote: "The extensive and fertile territories of the Seiks, and their attachment and application in the midst of warfare, to the occupations of agriculture, must evidently produce a large revenue. The districts dependent on Lahore, in the reign of Aurangzebe, produced, according to Mr. Bernier, a revenue of two hundred forty-six lacks and ninety-five thousand rupees; and we are naturally led to suppose from the industrious skill of the Seiks in the various branches of cultivation, that no great decrease of that amount can have taken place since the Panjab has fallen into their possession."¹

In the famine of 1783 most of the Sikh chiefs continued their *langars* or free dining halls to supply food to the poor and the needy. Some of them spent all their money for this purpose. Speaking about a Sikh chief of the Montgomery district, a report says: "The famine of 1783 A.D. occurred in Budh Singh's time. He is said to have sold all his property, and to have fed the people with grain from the proceeds."²

In 1788 James Rennell in his book entitled *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan; or the Moghul Empire* on pp. cxxi—ii recorded: "We know but little concerning the state of their government and politics: but the former is represented as being mild". Further on he remarks: "They have extended their territories on the south-east, that is, into the

¹ *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1802, pp. 10 11

² *Montgomery District Gazetteer*, 34.

province of Delhi; very rapidly of late years; and perhaps, the *Zemindars* of that country may have found it convenient to place themselves under the protection of the Seiks, in order to avoid the more oppressive government of their former masters."

About the toleration of the Sikhs in matters religious the same writer on pp. lxiv—lxv recorded: "They differ from most religionists, in that, like the Hindoos, they are perfectly tolerant in matters of faith."

William Franklin was for several years in touch with the Sikhs. In his *Shah Aulum* on p. 77 he wrote: "But though fond of plunder, the Seiks, in the interior parts of their country, preserve good order, and a regular government: and the cultivation of their lands is attended with much assiduity."

About the close of the eighteenth century George Thomas who frequently came into contact with the Sikhs stated: "The nature of the Seik government is singular, and probably had origin in the unsettled state of the tribe when first established in their possessions. Within his own domains each chief is lord paramount. He exerts an exclusive authority over his vassals, even to the power of life and death; and to increase the population of his districts, he proffers a ready and hospitable asylum to fugitives from all parts of India. Hence, in the Seik territories, though the government be arbitrary, there exists much less cause for oppression than in many of the neighbouring states; and hence likewise, the cultivator of the soil being liable to frequent change of masters, by the numerous revolutions that are perpetually occurring, may be considered as one of the causes of the fluctuation of the national force."¹

Malcolm who travelled in the Sikh country in 1803 in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* on p. 57 says: "In no country, perhaps, is the *Rayat*, or cultivator, treated with more indulgence."

The insignificant and obscure places were converted into

¹ George Thomas, 114

flourishing towns. By way of illustration only three references, two of the extreme frontiers on the east and the west and one of the centre would suffice. Milkha Singh, the warden of marches in the north-west, "invited traders from Bhera, Miani, Pind Dadan Khan and Chakwal, the trading towns of the Jhelum and Shahpur districts, to settle in Rawalpindi, and under his auspices the town rapidly grew in importance."¹

Kalanaur in Gurdaspur district was possessed by Jaimal Singh son of Haqiqat Singh Kanhiya. It lay almost deserted, but Jaimal Singh took great pains to revive its past glory, and succeeded in raising its population to about 400 shops, and 3,000 houses.²

In the extreme east on the banks of the Jumna Rai Singh Bhangi greatly developed Jagadhri where he settled a number of bankers from Najibabad. "Under his protection Nukoor (in Saharanpur district) developed from a comparatively insignificant provincial town into a place of some magnitude."³

4. Affluence of the Sikh Chiefs

The prosperous condition of the Sikh chiefs, confined exclusively to rural standards which put them almost on equality with their subjects is thus described by an eye-witness:—"Visit the Sikh *jagirdar* in his castle and you will find much, that speaks of affluence and rude comfort, little

¹ *Rawalpindi District Gazetteer*, 120.

² *Ahmad Shah*, 598.

"بکلیہ ویران گشت باحدیکہ بیشہ و زیستان گشت و شیران
و درندگان آرام کردند تا آنکہ جیمل سنگہ پسر حقیقت سنگہ
با آبادی آن پرداخت و تا مدت سی سال حکومت آنجا داشت
و بسبب عدل و رعایت او الجتہ رونق پیدا کرد و بمقدار سی صد
چهار صد دکان و قریب دو ہزار خانہ آباد شد"

³ *Calcutta Review*, LXI. 1875, p. 42.

of civilization or improvement. Through fields promising abundant harvests, you will find your way to the entrenched fort, which is at once the title deed of his estate, the asylum of his family and the store-house of his plunder. You will be met by the Singh himself on the draw-bridge, a venerable figure, with a beard of which Abraham or any of the twelve Patriarchs might have been proud ; by his side are his sons, and his sons' sons, and a train of followers, a patriarchal group, from the centre of which the old man will make his offerings of sweets and rupees.....He will show you over his fort, which exhibits on all sides signs of rural abundance".¹

5. *Sufferings caused by Internal Turmoils*

The people suffered to a certain extent from the internecine warfare of the Sikhs. A number of letters that passed between some Sikh chiefs, bearing no dates, but possibly written in early nineties of the eighteenth century, throw some light on this state of affairs. Below are given some points from them :

"I am often anxious to get news of your side. But I also could not write you owing to a fight between Nanumal and the Sikhs of this neighbourhood."

Mahta Sahajram, a resident of Sunam, was deprived of his goods in the vicinity of Kaithal. A request was made to the chief of the place for the restoration of his property.

In a letter written to Lala Khushhal Rai it is stated that in a fight between Raja Sahib Singh and Abdul Ghafur Khan Afghan of Kasur "two or three villages are completely ruined, and God is witness that no trace of any cultivation is left. Brick-buildings have been levelled to the ground."

A letter addressed to Gurdatt Singh of Ladwa says : "A number of shawls were brought a few days ago. But owing

¹ *Ibid.*, X, July-December, 1848, p. 14.

to the disturbances of the Sikhs the road is closed. Not to speak of human beings even birds cannot fly that way without difficulty. As soon as the danger on the road disappears the shawls will be sent."

Another letter states that four hundred Sikhs and Rajputs drove away the cattle of the villages Arnauli and پرو تھری. The *zamindars* of the neighbourhood gathered in a large number to oppose them. In a fierce fight with arrows, balls and bullets the *zamindars* were defeated. "The *zamindars* were so much terrified that with grass between their jaws and leaving their arms behind came to seek pardon declaring they should be considered oxen and be forgiven."

Dalel Singh and Albel Singh, being intoxicated with pride, invested the fort of Kotla with a large number of troops, and severe fighting was going on day and night.

Dasaundha Singh, son of Tara Singh, at the head of a strong force marched from Rahon, and encamped on the banks of the Sutlej. This created a great tumult in that district.

Fatah Singh was fighting with Sodhis.

Sujan Singh and Hari Singh marched against Fatah Singh and were encamped at Lutheri.

Karam Singh Nirmala, Bhanga Singh and Diwan Singh and others were ravaging the country of Rai Kalha.

Four hundred horse of the Ahluwalias lay encamped near the village of Harchowal. They were suddenly attacked by Jodh Singh. A sharp conflict ensued in which the Ahluwalias lost nearly 100 men, while on Jodh Singh's side five Sikhs including the son of Chaudhri Khameru were killed.

A letter addressed to Gurdatt Singh says :—

"I am fighting on the side of Jai Singh (Kanhiya). After subduing a large part of the Jullundur Doab he has invested the fort of Dasuya which will fall in a day or two. God is kind to us, and friends are joining us from far and near. The Sikh chiefs such as Mohan Singh, Amar

Singh, Wazir Singh, Fatah Singh, Baz Singh, Tara Singh and Jassa Singh¹ were anxious to see Jai Singh. We are resolved to march to Talwara. Kahloris also wish to have an interview with us."

A body of Sikhs attacked Jawalaji in Kangra district. The invaders were defeated after a stubborn resistance. They escaped first to Haripur, and then to Goler where they were plundered of all their goods, horses and elephants, etc.¹

6. Proprietary Tenures

As a rule the Sikhs did not interfere with an individual's property in land. New lands could be acquired by a person by breaking up as much land as he could cultivate. There was plenty of land available in the neighbourhood of a village which the villagers owned in common, and cultivators being scarce nobody raised objection to one's acquiring new land. Some difference was, however, maintained between the old proprietary body and such men. The latter enjoyed all the privileges, but they had no voice in the management of the village. Thus it was considered a subordinate tenure.

It was this tenure which was sometimes interfered with by the Sikh *kārdārs*, who in special cases would appoint a favourite of theirs in newly acquired lands. "Still it is remarkable how numerous are the occupants who have held their land for even two and three generations, and how readily their right to hereditary occupancy has been admitted by the proprietary body in general."²

To maintain the integrity of land in the possession of descendants of a common ancestor, who owned and inhabited the village, nobody would sell land to an outsider. Consequently sales of land were unknown. If a man could not cultivate as much land as he formerly did and left a good deal of it uncultivated on account of family or finan-

¹ *Ruq'at*, folios 4b-37b.

² *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 118-Q.

cial reasons, the community arranged for the cultivation of the abandoned fields, and the man paid revenues only for so much land as held in actual occupation.¹

The Sikhs attached to *maliki* or proprietorship the same ideas as at the present day and the Sikh *kārdār* seldom interfered with the cultivating community which paid as much tax to the state as the merest tenants-at-will. "As long as the community paid all their taxes," says the compiler of the Jullundur District Gazetteer on p. 28, "and kept up their estate in a high state of cultivation, he never interfered and left them to their own internal government. Indeed, he would assist them in preserving their organisation, adjusting their shares, and so on. I have known cases where questions of this kind have been taken up by *kārdārs* and referred to arbitration."

In certain parts where the Sikh chiefs exacted revenue strictly as in Jhang district a peculiar type of tenure called *Hāthrakhāidār* came into existence. The *zamindars* made over the proprietary share of the produce along with responsibility for revenue to some influential man whom the Sikhs treated with consideration. The contractor who thus engaged to pay revenue to government in consideration of the proprietary share minus the proprietor's fee was called *Hāthrakhnewāla*, and the man who made over the produce, and withdrew from the responsibility for the government revenue was known as *Hāthrakhwānewāla*.²

Some changes also took place in the hills. When the hill chiefs were defeated by the Sikhs, many Rajput communities left their land and migrated to other places with their masters. Their fields were taken possession of either by their tenants or colonists from the surrounding villages.³

¹ *Karnal District Gazetteer*, 118-9.

² *Jhang District Settlement Report*, 1874-80, p. 55.

³ *Shahpur Kandi Settlement Report*, 1877.

7. *The Revenue System:*

The land revenue was generally charged in kind, but certain kinds of produce such as cotton, indigo, poppy and sugar-cane were paid for in cash. Though the mode of collection differed greatly with various chiefs, yet the majority of them preferred *batai*. One half of the net produce or about 40 per cent of the gross produce "after deducting for expenses of cultivation" was the share demanded by the Sikh chiefs in general. From poor soil one-third and from lands near a river one-fourth was taken as the Government share.¹

The yield of grain was calculated by the *kārdār* with the assistance of appraisers. They roughly measured the field or guessed the area by the eye. "They can do this with unusual accuracy." Then they "very fairly" calculated the produce, which was determined per *bigha* of the field. They visited each field of each owner, examined the standing crops, and assessed it as equal to so many *bighas*. The number of *bighas* and the quantity of grain per *bigha* was entered against each man. A deduction of one-tenth was made for the village servants, and the remainder was divided between the *zamindar* and the Government in the fixed proportion. Then the price of grain for the harvest was fixed, and the value was calculated. The village money lender was called upon to advance the whole or a large portion of the amount to the *kārdār*. Afterwards the *kārdār* aided him in collecting the grain.²

The general rate on the whole at which a Sikh chief realized his share of the produce was one-third of grain and one-fourth of straw.³

In certain cases *zabti* or *jinsi* was applied at fixed rates, one rupee per *kachcha bigha*. The average income of past years served as a basis for the assessment. Only certain crops of a particular area were subjected to this system. For

¹ *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, 93.

² *Jhelum District Gazetteer*, 136

³ *Ludhiana District Gazetteer* -178.

instance a tenant grew maize, rice, pulses, oilseeds and *chari*. The last crop being the fodder for cattle^a was daily consumed. Thus on such crops or others as settled with the proprietor a fixed sum in cash was charged.

Some Sikh chiefs imposed additional taxes. By way of example in the territory of Kaithal the village of Hursola paid the following taxes :—

| | Rs. | as. | p. |
|--|-----|-----|----------------|
| <i>Mushakhsah</i> , or fixed demand for one crop ... | 310 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage on above at 25.5 ... | 79 | 0 | 9 |
| <i>Sirdebi</i> ... | 30 | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Nazarana</i> to State ... | 19 | 0 | 0 |
| „ „ <i>Musahibs</i> ... | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Bricks to repair fort etc. ... | 13 | 12 | 0 |
| <i>Nazar</i> to (all the <i>Rānis</i>) ... | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Qazi</i> allowance ... | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Talabāna</i> ... | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Nira</i> , rate fixed at 4 ... | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Thānadāri</i> ... | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Ugāhi</i> or expenses of collection ... | 7 | 3 | 6 |
| <i>Amini</i> at 1.5 per cent and Record Keeper ... | 4 | 10 | 6 |
| Total ... | 502 | 11 | 9 ¹ |

A special practice known as *inām* was introduced by the Sikhs. In a newly-acquired territory if a Sikh chief did not find himself strong enough to subdue the cultivators, he would come to terms with the influential men of the locality, granting them half of the state revenues of certain villages or parts of a village, or exempting a plough or two of the cultivation from assessment. These men who were called *chauthdhis* or *ināmdārs* undertook to assist the Sikhs in ascertaining the resources of the village, in collecting the taxes and in preserving peace and order. The grants were generally maintained during the lifetime of the *ināmdār*. In course of

¹ Karnal District Gazetteer, 212.

time he became a very useful instrument, and his services were utilized in the detection and prevention of crimes, for managing disorganized estates, in furnishing supplies of provisions and their carriage, repair of roads, and in the construction of many useful public works.¹

The revenue defaulters of large arrears would generally take shelter with another chief who would extend to him every protection and would not deliver him to the chief ; but he was obliged to pay his debt as soon as he could do so.

The result of the revenue system adopted by the Sikhs is thus summed up. "In spite, however, of its faults, the system appears, upon Mr. Morris' own testimony already quoted, to have been wonderfully successful in promoting the extension of cultivation in a tract which, prior to the period of Sikh rule, was practically an uncultivated waste, inhabited only by pastoral and nomad tribes."²

8. Administration of Justice

Justice was administered in a rough and ready sort of way ; but their system was "most congenial to the temper of the people and best suited to the unsteady and changing character of their rule of government." Ordinary affairs of the village were settled by the *Panchayat*, which was 'always chosen from men of the best reputation', and this court therefore enjoyed "a high character for justice." Malcolm was informed by a Panjabi who had personal experience of British courts in Bengal of "its great superiority over the vexatious system of the English government ; which was, he said, tedious, vexatious, and expensive, and advantageous only to clever rogues".³

¹ *Shahpur District Gazetteer*, 55 ; *Ambala District Gazetteer*, 43 ; *Gujrat District Gazetteer*, 99 ; *First Punjab Administration Report*, 1849-50, Sections 320—1 ; *Latif*, 295.

² *Gujranwala District Gazetteer*, 71.

³ *Malcolm*, 57-8.

While administering justice the Sikh chiefs applied much common sense. They examined witnesses and investigated the most complicated cases with firmness of temper and perseverance. They freely mixed with people of all classes and were consequently informed of exact happenings, and no room was left for intrigues and counter-complaints. No man disputed their decisions, which were arrived at with patient care, and delivered with dignity and impartiality. Their simple manners and affectionate personality had a charming effect even on the biggest rogue, who submitted to the punishment awarded to him quietly and submissively.

In cases of theft if the stolen goods were recovered the thieves were fined and imprisoned until payment was made in the outer room or verandah of the police station, fort or castle. If after paying his fine he went to rob again and again, he had his right hand cut off. The fines were imposed "not so much according to the gravity of the offence as to the means of the offender". The most serious and extremely heinous crimes were punished with the loss of ears, nose, hands or eyes, though it was rarely resorted to. To trace stolen cattle regular trackers were employed. When the footprints were tracked into the lands of another he was forced either to lead them beyond his territory or to pay for the cattle.

There was no capital punishment even for murder. In such a case one or more female members of the murderer's family were given in marriage to the members of the family of the murdered, or a large sum of money was paid, or 125 *bighas* of land if available was surrendered.

In many cases farmers of revenue were the magistrates and judges. In towns courts were held by *qadāris* who were often Musalman *Qazis* and Hindu *Kayasths* rather than Sikhs. Under a big Sikh chief eminent *jāgirdārs* were also entrusted with the *faujdari* powers—civil, criminal and fiscal; and they exacted fines and lopped off limbs by way of penalties for crimes.

In large states judges were employed. As there was not much of security of tenure, bribes were occasionally resorted to. About the time of retirement the judges were compelled to yield to the state a portion of the money believed to have been received by them as bribes. "In Kythul it was, and in Patiala it is still the fashion for the judges to pass as many years in imprisonment as on the bench; probably as a means of eliciting for the *sircar* (Government) a portion of the bribes supposed to have been given."¹

9. Free Dining Halls

One common feature of the life of the Sikh chiefs in those days was the maintenance of *langars* or free dining halls, where people of all classes and creeds were fed. The *langars* were kept open even in the worst years of drought, and afforded relief to members of the poor classes who flocked to them in search of food.²

10. Trade

In order to increase their revenues the Sikhs wanted to develop trade. A certain amount of it did exist; but the bulk of it was checked by innumerable transit duties on almost every article of traffic levied at short distances, while passing through the territory of each independent chief.

Along the Afghan border many Afghans and Baluches came in the Panjab in winter with their families and flocks, and returned to their mountain homes on the approach of hot weather. Some of these men engaged themselves in carrying on trade of petty merchandise. In addition to them the Pawindah caravans entered the Panjab about

¹ *Ibid.*, 127-8; *Latif*, 293-4; *Calcutta Review*, II, October—December, 1844, p. 205; *Douie's Punjab Land Administration Manual*, p. 29, Section 84.

² *Cf. Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 72

the same time, and leaving their families in the Derajat advanced into the heart of India accompanied by laden camels with the merchandise of Turkistan and Afghanistan.

While passing through the Panjab the charge of the caravan was as a rule entrusted with the Nanakputras the descendants of Nanak, who being related to the founder of Sikh religion enjoyed certain privileges. They were respected by the Sikhs in general and the merchants therefore escaped molestation.¹

Most of the trade of the Panjab had been diverted to the hills for safety's sake. But the road in the hills was not in good condition. Baron Hugel travelled by this road, and frequently remarked about its bad state :—"When the Sutlej is crossed it is hardly possible to conceive, that one can be in a country where any communication whatever is carried on." Further on he says :—"The road is so painful in many parts owing to the steepness of the rocks, that I chose rather to ford the stream a second time than brave them." From Jasrota to Jammu the road was rather worse :—"The road to Samba was the worst and most disagreeable I had yet met with in India, constantly leading through the fatal high grass, and sometimes passing over heaps of stones, at others tending downwards into the soft crumbling soil." He was again troubled by the difficult hill pathway :—"The road today was really terrible ; through a thick jungle ; neither mountain nor plain, neither forest nor open field ; it is a toilsome, dreary journey, over masses of stones, a zig-zag line from one wretched hamlet to another ; little or no cultivation is visible and what they call fields in tillage are scarcely to be distinguished from heap of stones."²

Sometimes the local chiefs would harass the travellers passing through their territory. Ghulam Muhammad Khan, the envoy of Shah Zaman, had the bitter experience of this

¹ *Latif*, 294-5 ; *Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 45 ; *Karnal District Gazetteer*, 54.

² *Hugel*, 29, 39, 66, 68.

nature near Jammu. He wrote :—"On the 2nd of *Ramzan* 1212 *Hijri* (18th February, 1798) I took leave of his august majesty and left Kabul. I experienced many delays on the road on the 23rd *Zilhuja*, 1212 (8th June, 1798) I encamped at Mankot (now called Ramkot, about 40 miles east of Jammu) four days' journey to the eastward of Jammu. On the 24th (9th June) Raja Chatar Singh, the proprietor of the place, a rapacious freebooter, collected a body of about 1,500 men, and formed the daring design of plundering us. On the 25th (10th June) when I received intimation of his design I returned towards Jammu. He attempted to stop us on the road. In short from the borders of Mankot to the frontiers of Behandrata, Raja Bhup Dev's place where we arrived, when one *pahar* of the day had elapsed, we kept up a continued battle with guns and swords. By God's help I proceeded from thence to a place of safety, without any other impediment to ourselves or baggage. Fortunately the villain failed in his attempt. Thirty-five of the cursed wretches were sent to the infernal regions and of twenty-four champions of the true faith thirteen tasted sweets of martyrdom and the others were wounded. We passed in safety to Jammu. On the 14th *Muharram* (28th June) I shall proceed from Jammu towards Nahan."¹

The trade in the plains of the Panjab was not carried on by any particular route, as it depended on the character of the chiefs through whose territories they passed. But as a great part of the trade was conducted from Amritsar to Machhiwara and Patiala where from it trifurcated. Through Hansi and Rajgarh it went to Rajputana; by way of Thanesar and Karnal to the Gangetic Doab, and *via* Kaithal, Jind and Rohtak to Delhi.²

Being afraid of the Sikhs the Musalman merchants of Afghanistan and Turkistan stopped passing through the Panjab and entered the Gangetic valley by marching across

¹ *Imperial Records, Political Proceedings* 6th August, 1798. No. 47

² *George Thomas*. 254.

Rajputana, and as a consequence the city of Jaipur rose to importance.¹

11. Coins

The coins of the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs bore the inscription of the coins of Ahmad Shah Durrani:—

"حکم شد از قادر بیچوں با جہد پادشاہ"

سکہ زن بر سیم و زر از ماہی تا مہماہ

سنہ جلوس میہمنت مانوس ضرب....."

(God, the inscrutable, commanded Ahmad, the king to stamp silver and gold currency, from the pisces to the moon.

In the year of the reign associated with prosperity struck at.....)

There were four important mints in the Cis-Sutlej country—Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal, all of which made no change either in the legend, the date and the mint with the exception of a mark or sign of a particular chief issuing the coin. For instance to quote from *Griffin's Rajas of the Panjab* "Maharaja Amar Singh's rupee is distinguished by the representation of a *kalghi* (small aigrette plume); Maharaja Sahib Singh by that of a *saif* (or two-edged sword)." Sir R. C. Temple, however, did not agree with this statement. "At Patiala", says he, "I found that the officials knew very little, but that the bankers know a great deal, and traditionally knew to whom to assign the various rupees at once. Their statements were that Alha Singh, Amar Singh, Sahib Singh all used the *kalghi*, Karm Singh the *saif*."²

Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind borrowed the die in complete form from Patiala, and used Ahmad Shah's name on his coins, though in actual practice he owed allegiance not to Ahmad Shah Durrani, but to Shah Alam II of Delhi.

The coins of the Bhais of Kaithal were of similar type; but they were inferior to the coins of the neighbouring

¹ *Francklin*, 84.

² *The Indian Antiquary*, XVIII, 1889, p. 325

Sikh Rajas in artistic merit. Different coins of the Kaithal chiefs bore considerably different minor marks.

The rulers of Nabha were the only exception for making an attempt "to vary the stereotyped form of the coinage of these Panjab Chiefs, but it will be observed that originality has not gone beyond imitating the legend of the overshadowing State of Lahore."¹

In the Trans-Sutlej territory two types of coins were used by numerous Sikh chiefs. One of them copied the coins struck by the Sikhs at Lahore in 1765, and it bore the following inscription :—

”دیک و تیغ و فتح و نصرت بیدرزنگ

یافت از نانک گورو گویند سنگد

[Kettle (the means of feeding the needy), the sword (the power to protect one's self, the weak and the helpless), victory and prompt assistance (are) obtained from Nanak (and) Guru Gobind Singh.]

The other coin had this verse inscribed on it :—

”سکه زد بر هر دو عالم شاه نانک واهب است

فتح تیغ گورو گویند سنگد سچا صاحب است

[The bountiful Shah Nanak struck the coin in both the worlds ;

Victory attends the sword of Guru Gobind Singh, the true master.²]

¹ *Ibid.*, 331.

² *Imperial Records. Secret Department*, 7th July, 1797 No 3

CHAPTER X

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

1. *Predominance of Villages*

A VAST majority of the populace lived in villages which were inhabited mostly by husbandmen, menials, traders and priests. Each village formed a separate and self-sustaining community providing almost all its needs inside it, such as growing its own food, weaving its own cloth, tanning its own leather and making its own implements. It looked to the outside world only for a little salt, spices, some fine cloth and the coin in which it paid some of its revenue.

In the Eastern Panjab which remained a battle-ground for the Mughals, the Marathas and the Sikhs, the villages were pretty large and closely situated to one another, as in times of anarchy the large and compact village communities could easily unite against the common danger. The Central Panjab where the Sikh rule was at its best had its fields and villages widely scattered owing to a greater degree of order and security that prevailed there. In the hills where there was nothing to tempt the marauder, and on account of the nature of the soil, the villages were very small, and lay widely scattered. In the North-Western Panjab and the Multan province the people generally led a pastoral life, and villages were found only here and there, for reasons of the castes of the cultivating communities and the physical character of the tract. The trans-Indus territory was occupied by Gakhars, Afghans and Baluchas, and their small, detached homesteads lay surrounding the strongholds of their chiefs, owing to the

tribal form of land tenure.¹

2. *Prosperous Condition of the People*

In the country south of Panipat the Sikh rule was never fully established. It was held by the Sikhs as feudatories of the Marathas. As a matter of fact a regular contest went on between these two powers for supremacy in this region. The result was that the tract was converted into no-man's land, coveted by both and protected by neither. About the close of the century it also became a prey of the most audacious freebooter, George Thomas.

The country north of Panipat was on the whole governed well. The flourishing condition of the territory of Thanesar could not escape the notice of Captain Davies, the settlement officer of the district: "It cannot fail I think to strike the most casual observer moving about this *paraganah* that its condition not long ago must have been infinitely more thriving than it now is. The ruinous state of the towns and villages, many of them disproportionately large for the number now occupying them; the numerous wells abounding in each estate, half of them now neglected; the proximity of the villages to one another; all point to some not very distant period when this part of the district was inhabited by a much denser population than that now located in it; and the evidence favouring this supposition is strengthened by the well-known fact that under the Sikh rule it paid with ease a revenue twice the amount of the present assessment, and that such was the case my enquiries

¹ Even as late as 1881 the distribution of population in the Panjab had the same character: "The three great towns of Delhi, Amritsar and Lahore contain one-fifth of the urban and one-fortieth of the total population of British Territory; that the 34 towns of over 15,000 souls include just half the urban population of British Territory, that a third of the rural population of British Territory live in villages containing fewer than 1,000 and about three-quarters villages of fewer than 2,000 inhabitants." *Report on the Census of the Panjab, 1881, Book 1, pp. 18-22, Ludhiana District Gazetteer, 42.*

into the history of this district have fully established."¹

Under the Ladwa chiefs the people thrived as it is testified by the same authority : "The condition of this portion of the district taken as a whole is prosperous."²

The district of Shahabad enjoyed equal prosperity. The same writer says : "The general condition of the *parganah* may be pronounced highly prosperous, and the assessment light and equable."³

Side by side with the Sikh principalities in the Karnal district there was the state of Kunjpura ruled over by Afghan chiefs. By way of comparison the condition of people in the Kunjpura state would be quoted here in the words of the same settlement officer : "The *zamindars* complained to me very bitterly of the many annoyances to which they were subjected by the Nawab's underlings in those villages in which the *jagirdar* has been allowed to take his dues in kind ; and as the Nawab has had extensive magisterial and revenue powers, which he may be tempted to abuse in his private dealings with his *zamindars*, it will be best in my opinion to remove all excuse for interference by directing that where the *zamindars* are willing to accept the terms offered they be allowed to do so without giving the *jagirdars* the option of holding *kham*. Two villages in this *parganah* have been almost deserted owing to the dissensions between the proprietors and the Nawab. The villages were undoubtedly over-assessed in the first instance. With the usual short-sightedness of a native, the Nawab would not admit it, and opposed reduction. A struggle ensued, in which as a matter of course the *zamindars* carried the day. The tactics adopted by them were first neglecting their cultivation, and then deserting in a body. The result was a much greater reduction than if the *jagirdar* had allowed a moderate amount of relief to be administered at the first."⁴

¹ *Karnal District Gazetteer*, 218.

² *Ibid.*, 217.

³ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 217-8

Moving to the west we find that in the Ludhiana district the rule of the Sikhs was very healthy and progressive. "The condition of the country," says the compiler of the Gazetteer, "during the latter part of the 18th century was one of considerable prosperity.....The petty chiefs appear to have done their best to encourage the spread of cultivation..... The Bet tract at the time of its transfer to this side of the river was mostly waste; and the greater part of the present small villages owe their origin to the Kakar and Ghaiba chiefs. One hears of few instances in which the proprietary body were at this time driven to desert their land by the oppression of the rulers. In fact the condition of the people was very much better at this time than it was subsequently under the followers of Ranjit Singh."¹

The condition of the people other than the cultivators was also of very considerable comfort. Their food was good and they had enough of it. They were well-clothed and well-housed. They possessed fine physique which showed that they did not suffer from deficiency of nourishment.

The *zamindars* were well-to-do. Their houses were generally found to contain valuable property in the way of bronze and brass utensils, clothes, jewellery and some hard cash.²

The Sikhs succeeded in establishing peace and order even in the most unruly tracts, and the author of the Jhelum district Gazetteer on p. 45 testifies to this fact when he says that the Sikhs introduced "a rude and imperfect order" in place of "perpetual but petty warfare."

3. *Some Characteristics of the Hindus, Sikhs and Musalmans*

The Musalmans preponderated in the west, the Sikhs in the centre and the Hindus in the east of the Panjab. They bore different characteristics. The Hindu was quiet and thrifty.

¹ *Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 25

² *Ibid.*, 63.

He led a busy life, even leaving the worship of his gods to his womenfolk. His chief ambition was to build a brick house and to spend more money than his neighbour at his daughter's marriage.

The Sikhs were proverbially the "finest peasantry in India." They were sturdy and resolute, and possessed a manly love for sports and open-air life. "The Sikh is more independent, more brave, more manly than the Hindu, and no whit less industrious and thrifty; while he is less conceited than the Musalman, and not devoured by that carking discontent which so often seems to oppress the latter."¹

As regards the characteristics of the Muslims, it would be well to quote the same authority :—

"It is curious how markedly for evil is the influence which conversion to even the most impure form of Mahomedanism has upon the character of the Panjab villager; how invariably it fills him with false pride and conceit, disinclines him for honest toil and renders him more extravagant, less thrifty, less contented, and less well-to-do than his Hindu neighbour.....But when we move through a tract inhabited by Hindus and Musalmans belonging to the same tribe, descended from the same ancestor, and living under the same conditions, and find as we pass each village, each field, each house, we can tell the religion of its owner by the greater idleness, poverty, and pretension, which marked the Musalman, it is difficult to suggest any explanation of the fact. It can hardly be that the Musalman branch of a village enjoyed under the Mahomedan Emperors any such material advantage over their Hindu brethren as could develop habits of pride and extravagance which should survive generations of equality. And yet, whatever the reason, the existence of the difference is beyond a doubt. The Musalman seems to think that his duty is completely performed when he has proclaimed his belief in one God and that it is the

¹ *Census Report*, 1881. i, 103-4.

business of Providence to see the rest ; and when he finds his stomach empty he has a strong tendency to blame the Government, and to be exceedingly discontented with everybody but himself."¹

Observations² to the same effect are made by the author of *Sialkot District Gazetteer*, on p. 41 : "The Hindus, and particularly the Rajputs in the upper portion of the district, near Zafarwal, Chaprar, and across the river in Bajwāt seem a jovial, light-hearted people, fond of sport, sociable and upright in their domestic life. The Musalmans, on the other hand, are less tractable ; they are litigious, given to combination to carry a point ; and ever ready to practise deceit to obtain a gainful end."

The age of marriage also differed considerably among these three communities. The Hindus married rather early in life, the Muslims later, and the Sikhs latest of all.

4. Communal Relations

There was no Hindu, Muslim and Sikh problem in the sense in which it exists to-day. All the three communities as a rule lived peacefully, and in social and religious matters they often followed the practices of others. The *Gazetteer of the Panjab, Provincial Volume*, 1838-9, compiled and published under the authority of the Panjab Government on p. 122 says : "It is even difficult in many cases to draw any very definite lines between the several creeds. In the great religious centres and everywhere among the more educated classes, the distinctions are sufficiently well-marked. But in the border lands where the great faiths meet and especially among the ignorant peasantry, the various observances and beliefs that distinguish the followers of the several faiths in their purity are so strongly blended and intermingled that it is often almost impossible to say that one prevails rather than another. Thus the Mussalman peasantry of the Delhi territory are still in many ways almost as much Hindu as their

¹ *Ibid.*

unperverted brethren ; the Sikh of Sirsa is often a Sikh only in speech and habit ; while the Hindu of Lahul is almost more a Buddhist than a Hindu."

Even in the west where the population was predominantly Muslim they lived as good neighbours. The *Gazetteer of the Gujrat District* on p. 41 says : "Although the population may be said to be almost wholly Muhammadan, Islamism is exhibited in only a very imperfect form. What may be called social religion is strong enough, but the proselytes of 300 years have never entirely forsaken the customs of their old faith, and still in many respects abide by them. Although, therefore, every village has its mosque, family *prohits* (at least among the Jats) are not rare, and while acknowledging the *sharah* and solemnizing marriages according to the rites of the Koran, Brahmans are not uncommonly made the agents in arranging betrothals. Marriages between persons of the same clan are by the Jats deemed improper ; so also the Hindus. They hold themselves free from many of the burdensome observances which appear in so great measure to constitute Hinduism in Hindustan. Both classes are, in their mutual ignorance, drawn much more towards each other, and except when a cow is killed, or a similar outrage committed upon the feelings of either, they live together in peace."

Some more evidence is available on this subject showing that there were little differences between Hindus and Musalmans in those days : "Living thus side by side with their Hindu brethren in the same or in the next village, sharing property in the same land, and forming a part of the same family with them, it is impossible that the Musalman convert should not have largely retained their old religious customs and ideas. In fact, till some 25 years ago, they were Musalman but in name. They practised circumcision, repeated the *Kalma*, and worshipped the village deities. But after the Mutiny a great revival took place. Muhammadan priests travelled about preaching and teaching the true faith. Now almost every village in which Musalmans own any considerable portion, has its mosque, often of

adobe only ; and 'all the grosser and open idolatries have been discontinued. But the local deities and saints still have their shrines even in villages held only by Musalmans ; and are still worshipped by the majority though the practice is gradually declining. The women, especially, are offenders in this way. A Musalman woman who had not offered to the small-pox god would feel that she had deliberately risked her child's life. Family priests are still kept up as of old ; and Brahmans are still fed on the usual occasions. As for superstitions, as distinct from actual worship, they are untouched by the change of faith, and are common to Hindu and Musalman."¹

The Muslim chiefs as a rule employed Hindu *Diwans* to manage their financial affairs, and in certain cases matters of extremely personal nature were entrusted to their care. On one occasion Jahan Khan, the Durrani commander-in-chief, asked Inayatullah, the Sial chief of Jhang district for one of his sisters in marriage. "There were three or four unmarried, but the proud Sial sent word to Bhawani Das, his *Diwan*, to have them all married at once, and declined the proffered alliance on the ground that he had no sisters unmarried."²

It was only in certain places where the Hindu population was scornfully treated by their Muslim neighbours. The *Gazetteer of the Dera Ghazi Khan District, 1893—1897*, on p. 75 states : "While subject to the Muhammadans, the Hindus were allowed to ride nothing but donkeys. They were also forbidden to wear turbans. Even now, in spite of the efforts of the Sikhs during their supremacy to do away with these signs of social degradations a Hindu, unless he be in Government employment, seldom wears anything but a skull cap or rides anything but a donkey."

There were also little differences between the Hindus and Sikhs, and both were dominated by the Brahmins. "Hindus and Sikhs, except Kukas, are greatly ruled by Brahmins. Everyone has a *parohit* or priest for every-day-life, and a *pāda*

¹ *Karnal District Gazetteer*, 85-6.

² *Jhang District Gazetteer*, 32.

or superior priest (who must be a learned man, read in the Scriptures) for marriage and other celebrations. Whatever observances a Brahmin enjoins must be performed; and there is often a good deal of tyranny, hard penances being ordered for trifling faults."¹

The *Census Report*, 1881, Vol. i, p. 112 also bears evidence to the same effect: "Nearly all Sikh villagers reverence and make use of the Brahman almost as freely as do their Hindu neighbours."

5. Character and Disposition

An average villager led a life of monotonous toil. But he was marvellously patient, cheerful and contented even under very depressing circumstances. He was celebrated for hospitality "in the extreme". Victor Jacquemont wrote home: "I know not whether it is through an optical illusion, but the Punjab and its inhabitants please me much. Perhaps you will say, that it is because I see them through a shower of gold; but the unsophisticated Seikhs of this country have a simplicity and open honesty of manner, which a European relishes the more, after two years' residence or travelling in India."²

Regarding his moral conduct Ibbetson says: "I will say that according to his standard he is moral though his standard is not ours. The villager looks at the end, and not at the means. If he honestly thinks that his friend is in the right in his claim, a respectable man will tell any number of circumstantial lies to produce the same impression on the mind of the judge. But if he thinks him in the wrong he will not bear evidence either for or against him; he will say that he knows nothing about the matter. And when formally confronted by the whole brotherhood, a villager will rarely persist in a claim which he knows to be false. Of the good faith that governs the

¹ *Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 73.

² *Jacquemont*, i, 392.

mass of the people in their dealings with one another it would I believe be difficult to speak too highly, especially between members of the same community. Of their sexual morality, I can say nothing. If scandals are common, we hear but little of them, for they are carefully hushed up. My impression is that the village life is infinitely more pure in this respect than that of an English agricultural village; partly, no doubt, because of the early marriages which are customary."¹

The people were in general illiterate and knew little about their rights and privileges. They would not bother much about the details of their lands or revenue, and would believe in the honesty of their headman and accountant. If the payment did not differ much from the sum remitted in the previous year, he was satisfied. But a Jat would not tamely submit to his headman. He would subject every item in the accounts "to the most rigid scrutiny."²

The people of the Chaj and Sind Sagar Doabs were predatory by practice. "The men, stout, fierce, and fearless of man, or beast, clad in shaggy cloaks of brown camel's hair, drive out the herds to feed, and, with long matchlock in hand, and burning match, lie full length along the ground and listen for strange footfalls on the horizon. Should an enemy approach, the discharge of a single matchlock would be heard over the whole plain, and summon thousands of the tribe to the point where danger threatened or plunder allured. Such were the people whose gipsy-like encampment strewed the Thal at the time I speak of."³

As regards the use of intoxicants according to a report some of the Hindu Jats were in the habit of using *post* and opium and the Sikhs consumed spirits; "but the ordinary Hindu and Muhammadan considered it a sin to do so."⁴

On the whole an average Panjabi led a life of great con-

¹ Karnal District Gazetteer, 83-4.

² *Ibid.*, 117.

³ Report on the Census of the Panjab, 1881, 1, 52.

⁴ Ludhiana District Gazetteer, 62.

tentment, and his wants were easily satisfied. A proverb still current formulated the demands of a villager thus :—

”دس چنگے بیل دیکھ و دس من دیرڑی
حق حسابی نیا وساک سر جیوڑی“

[Let me see ten good oxen and ten maunds of mixed grain ; the milk of a grey buffalo and some sugar to stir into it ; a fair assessment demanded after the harvest ; and devoted relatives. God give me so much, and I would not speak another word.¹]

6. Food

Cereals formed the chief article of diet. Vegetables were not much in favour. Their place was occupied by pulses. Local fruit when ready was freely consumed. Meat was used by a very small section of society, and that also not very regularly. Wheat, gram, pulses and barley were eaten in summer and *makki*, *jowar*, *bajra*, coarse rice, *china*, *moth*, *mung* and green *sags* in winter. The total consumption for a grown up male of the agricultural class was about ten maunds, and of the non-agricultural class nearly eight maunds of grain per year. The daily consumption of food grain for a man was a seer ; while the peasant woman also ate as much as the man ; and there is no wonder, for a Jat woman was neither a lazy creature nor devoid of muscle. The rough estimate is given below :—

| | Agriculturists | Non-Agriculturists |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Man | 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ seers | 1 seer |
| Woman | 1 „ | $\frac{3}{4}$ „ |
| Old person | 1 „ | $\frac{3}{4}$ „ |
| Two children ² | 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ „ | 1 „ |
| | <hr/> 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ seers | <hr/> 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ seers |

¹ *Kanai District Gazetteer*, 83

² *Ambala District Gazetteer*, 32, *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, 40, *Gazetteer of the Delhi District*, 45

To take the quantity of various cereals into consideration the average yearly consumption of a family of five persons—husband, wife, two children and one old man—among the agricultural and labouring classes was as follows :—

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Bajra</i> and <i>jowar</i> | 8 maunds |
| Coarse rice and maize | 5 „ |
| Pulses | 5 „ |
| Wheat, gram and barley mixed | 10 „ |
| Gram | 5 „ |
| <i>Masur</i> and <i>Mandwa</i> | 3 „ |
| <hr/> | |
| | 36 maunds |

The estimate for higher classes whether in the city or in the village was as follows :—

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Maize and <i>Jowar</i> | 3 maunds |
| Fine rice | 4 „ |
| Pulses | 3 „ |
| Wheat | 13 „ |
| Gram | 4 „ |
| <hr/> | |
| | 27 maunds ¹ |

7. General Course of Life

The daily life of a village cultivator was a general routine imposing upon him great toil. He rose before dawn, took out his bullocks and went to the fields. About 9 o'clock his wife or child brought him a damper, often stale, and a bowl of butter-milk. At mid-day he enjoyed a hearty meal consisting of fresh damper, pulse boiled with spices or some cooked vegetable (*sag*). In summer he had it at home after bathing on the village well ; but in winter it was brought to him in the fields. In the evening he returned home with a load of grass for the cattle. Then he had his dinner often consisting of pearled *jowar* boiled in milk (*rabri*), or some crushed grain and pulse which was boiled (*khichri*), or

¹ *Kannal District Gazetteer*, 69.

porridge of coarsely ground grain (*dalia*),¹ or boiled rice (*chawal*), or rice-milk (*khir*), and some pulses, or some vegetables boiled in salt and *ghi* and some pickles and rough *chatni* as a relish. After his meal he went out for a smoke and a chat and slept at about ten o'clock.¹

The general life of a Panjabi householder whether Hindu, Musalman or Sikh was almost the same. In a family the children grew up and married under their father's roof. The girls went to their husbands, and sons brought their wives home. The children were born to the sons in course of time and more daughters-in-law arrived in the home. Some sons were more intelligent and industrious, while the rest were lazy and stupid. Among the daughters-in-law some were ambitious and fond of independent life. As a consequence dissensions arose among the women, which became unbearable ultimately leading to separation of elder sons with their wives and children. Each family was given a separate quarter in the same house or in the same courtyard, and managed its own income and expenditure. When the parents grew old they stayed with one of their sons, or lived turn by turn with all. Sometimes the separation was held up during the lifetime of the parents. The family expanded as a matter of course, and when the house or the court-yard became too small further separation took place.

This separation was confined only to domestic life, extending to expenditure on food, clothes, etc. It did not affect the land.

On the north-western frontier the tribal organisation prevailed and the land was jointly held by the tribe or clan, though the shares in the village went on increasing, as the families expanded.²

¹ *Ibid.*, 67-8.

² *Report on the Census of the Panjab, 1881*, part 1, 43, 44; *Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 43.

To set up leading independent life by the Sikh lads as soon as they were grown up was a common feature in those days. This fact also came into the notice of an English lady: "The usual custom among the

8. *Women*

The life of women on the whole was a monotony except on the days of festivals and fairs when decked in the gayest clothes they would make the most of these occasions in singing, laughing and joking. The women of the poorer classes including Rajputs and Brahmins went outside unveiled, and according to an Englishman "the uncovered face of a Hindoo girl, who comes to meet us, balancing a pyramid of water pots on her head, has to our taste, a far more modest and less suspicious aspect, than the shrouded form of a Mussulmanee, who, at our approach, stops, and turns her back, while she giggles within her *chudder*."¹

The Sikh women and many others rode on horseback. Even ladies of high social position led troops into the fields and received visitors. The same writer says: "At one such interview, to which we had been particularly invired by a venerable matron of eighty years of age, who in her youth had ridden many a raid, and probably been up with the foremost, but apparently had become fastidious in her old age, our hostess caused a sheet to be extended perpendicularly between us, as we talked. Younger and fairer damsels are less particular."²

The women of the Panjab in general being accustomed to open air life and good diet were noted for sound health and prettiness of their body. This fact also attracted the attention of the well known traveller Baron Hugel who writes: "The women of the Panjab are celebrated, and not undeservedly, for the beauty of their shape, their feet, and their teeth."³

The occupations of women differed in various parts

Sikhs is," wrote Emily Eden to her sister, "that once grown up, a boy ceases to be a son, or a brother, that he becomes an individual, bound only to take care of himself." *Up the Country*, ii, 42.

¹ *Calcutta Review*, ii, October-December, 1844, p. 423.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Hugel*, 60.

of the province. In the hills, south-eastern and eastern districts the Jat women, and of the same or lower social position worked in the fields. In the western parts they took no part whatsoever in field labour. In the remaining portions of the province the women of Arain and other castes of the same or lower standing lent a hand in agricultural work. All women with the exception of the wealthiest classes attended household affairs, which kept them so busy that they had hardly any time to spare for amusement. The children from early childhood assisted their parents in their professional work.¹

Young women drew water from the village well for the family; while young and old spent an hour or so early in the morning in grinding grain. Five seers was the ordinary task, and in the early dawn the only sound in the village was that of the woman's industry at the mill. Spinning was done invariably in the afternoon when the girls of the neighbourhood gathered together, laughed, joked, and had a jolly good time for about an hour or more.

9. Polygamy

Polygamy was not common in the Panjab due to the fact that the number of males was much larger than that of the females. It was confined to a small group of people belonging mostly to Muslims of the north-west frontier and the Salt Range tract, Sikh chiefs and a few rich Hindus. The wealthy and influential Musalmans of the Delhi province living chiefly in cities kept several wives, many slave-girls and concubines. The custom of *karewa* by which the widow of the elder brother was taken to wife by the younger brother was followed by Sikhs, Jats and the people of lower castes. On such an occasion the neighbours including the *lambardars* and other respectable members of the village community

¹ *Gazetteer of the Punjab Provincial Volume*, 1888-9, p. 117-8, *Gazetteer of the Delhi District*, 45.

were invited to witness the ceremony.¹

10. Infanticide

In general girls were considered great asset by most classes for the simple reason that male children could be married in exchange, or a handsome sum of money was always procurable. "They are regarded as a valuable commodity by most Jats, Khattris, Suds and the lower tribes."² But in most cases where a good price could be obtained for a girl, their upbringing imposed a considerable expense. To men of respectability who wished to marry their daughters to persons of means and repute, a large family of girls was universally believed to be a ruinous misfortune. Consequently female infanticide was resorted to by such men. Many Rajputs and Sikh chiefs, whose arrogance and pride deterred them from becoming fathers-in-law, also practised this heinous crime.

A child was frequently strangled to death either at the time of birth or shortly afterwards and sometime destroyed with a ceremony. A piece of sugar-cane molasses was put in the mouth of the baby and a skein of cotton was placed on her breast. The child was then put in an earthen jar, and buried in the ground with the recitation twice or thrice of the following incantation :—

”گڑ کھاڈیں پونی کاتیں آپ نہ آئیں بھیا گھاٹییں“

[Eat *gur*, spin cotton thread,

We do not want you, but send a brother instead.]

Men of charitable disposition would rescue a child on getting timely information. "Sometimes a Brahmin or Banya would rescue the child and bring it up as an adopted daughter—an act of great religious merit, and several living memorials (women who had in infancy been so rescued) are

¹ Report on the Census of the Panjab, 1881, vol. i, 27; Gazetteer of the Panjab Provincial Volume, 1888-9, p. 116; Ludhiana District Gazetteer, 45.

² Ludhiana District Gazetteer, 45.

or were till lately to be found in the district."¹

11. *Sati*

The custom of Sati or self-immolation of widows on the pyres of their husbands prevailed to a certain extent among the Hindu families of high social position.²

12. *Dancing Girls*

Dancing girls were frequently employed by the rich people for amusement. The entertainment by them on occasions of festivity was a common feature of life in those days. The practice of dedicating young and beautiful girls to temples existed to some extent. A bevy of such girls was found by Baron Hugel in the famous temple of Jawala-mukhi in Kangra District: "Female dancers are very numerous about the temple of Jawala-Mukhi, and they are rather fairer and prettier than usual. More than twenty, decked out with lilies, made their appearance before my tent-door in the afternoon, but I was ungallant enough to send them away unrewarded, in spite of their tender ditties and the bells they sounded so invitingly on the tips of their fingers."³

The female dancers were generally beautiful women, and were held in great estimation in northern India. In many cases men became fondly attached to dancing girls, neglected their business, dissipated their energy and property, and were often reduced to a "subsistence on charity."⁴

13. *Language*

The majority of the people in the Panjab spoke the Panjabi language. In the north-west it had a good deal of

¹ *Hoshiarpur District Gazetteer*, 30; *Karnal District Gazetteer*, 63

² *Ambala District Gazetteer*, 37.

³ *Hugel*, 45.

⁴ *Forster*, i, 288-9.

mixture of Pashto, in the south-west some combination of Sindhi, and in the south-east a large amalgamation of Hindi and Urdu. As regards the characters the village shopkeepers kept their accounts in *Lande Mahajani*, which, written rather illegibly, could be read either by the writer himself or some other experts. In towns and cities improved form of *Lande* known as *Ashrafe* was used by the trading classes. The Sikhs and "a few of the very well-to-do Hindu Jats" kept accounts in Gurmukhi. The Brahmins used *Nagri* characters. The Persian script was nowhere used by the people for purposes of business, except the educated and rich classes who carried on friendly correspondence in it¹

14. Fairs

A large number of fairs were held in the Panjab ; but the majority of the Hindus attended the fairs of Jawalamukhi in Kangra district, Naina Devi, Hardwar specially the Kumbh which took place every twelve years, Kurukshetra on the occasion of an eclipse of the sun, Pehowa where a great fair was held on the last day of the Hindu year, and Phalgu if the last day of the Shraddhs (the period of sixteen days devoted to the worship of the deceased ancestors) fell on a Monday. The Sikhs went to most of the above mentioned fairs as well as to Amritsar on the Baisakhi and Diwali days, when in addition to worship they purchased cattle. Some Musalmans went to Mecca, but most of them visited the local fairs held in honour of Muslim saints. While on their way the people behaved themselves towards one another with great courtesy and in an orderly manner. George Keene writes: "In hundreds and in thousands, the orderly crowds stream on. Not a bough is broken off a way-side tree, not a rude remark addressed to the passenger as he threads his horse's way carefully through the everywhere yielding ranks."²

¹ *Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 59.

² *Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 70 ; *Fall of the Moghul Empire*, 21.

15. *Manufacture of Arms*

Arms were manufactured in the Panjab at several places, but particularly in the village of Kotali Loharan in the Sialkot district. Iron was imported from Mandi and Peshawar, the former being of sand-stone formation. It was soft, pure, ductile and well-adapted to the purpose, and the material was "generally considered the best in India." The matchlocks prepared at Kotali were in great demand. "There is no doubt that the Koteli barrels are superior in strength as well as in beauty to ordinary matchlock barrels." The price of the best unornamented barrel was about fifteen rupees or thirty shillings.¹

¹ J. A. S. B., xvii, part 1, January to June, 1848, pp. 277-80.

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